

Sure Start Leominster and Kington User Satisfaction Consultation



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Sure Start Leominster and Kington User Satisfaction Consultation

Final report

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1. Introduction, objectives and methodology

1.1 Purpose and Objectives

M.E.L Research was commissioned by Sure Start Leominster and Kington (a third wave local programme) in December 2004 to undertake the independent administration of a user satisfaction questionnaire using a survey designed by Sure Start Leominster and Kington. The consultation was to take place with the parents and carers of children aged under four years of age in the Sure Start programme area.

The purposes of the consultation were three-fold:

- To establish baseline levels of user satisfaction with services in the programme area.
- To inform the future planning and delivery of Sure Start services.
- To answer the key 'so *what*' question- what difference has Sure Start made to the lives of families with young children in the programme area?

A key feature of the consultation was that it would provide baseline information and be replicable over time, to enable comparisons to be made in the future and with the original 2000 evaluation.

More specifically, the objectives were:

- To identify patterns of uptake of services by parents and carers of children aged under 4 years in the programme areas.
- To measure levels of satisfaction with local services, and the extent to which services in the programme areas meet the needs of local parents.
- To identify services where improvements in provision are required, and assess the demand for new services.
- To identify barriers to uptake of existing services
- To assess what difference Sure Start has made to the lives of families with children under 4 years in the programme area
- To identify parents interested in registering as Sure Start parents.
- To examine how responses differed by area of residence in the programme area.

1.2 Methodology

The methods of data generation were closely based on those used in the original baseline survey.

1.2.1 Survey of local parents and carers

A total of 150 face-to-face interviews were administered across the Leominster and Kington programme area during March 2004. In order to qualify for taking part in the survey, respondents had to:

- Live in the Leominster and Kington programme area

And

- Be a parent or guardian of at least one child aged 0 to 3 years 11 months

Or

- Be expecting to become a parent within the following 6 months

Under certain circumstances respondents who did not have a child under the age of 4 years and who were not expecting to become a parent were eligible to take part in the consultation, providing they had taken part in the original 2000 survey. All respondents, however, had to live within the programme area. Each interviewer was provided with a copy of the Sure Start boundary map so they could ensure that this was the case.

It is worth mentioning at this point that some degree of confusion as to the eligibility of respondents to take part in the survey did occur, in terms of their area of residence. Whilst all respondents were asked to confirm that they lived in the area, shown a map of the relevant programme area, and finally, asked to indicate their exact parish of residence within the area, a closer inspection of results revealed that some respondents still originated from outside the programme boundaries. Whilst this only represents a very small number of the total respondents, it should be flagged as a potential learning point for future consultations.

This issue could be attributed to the huge catchments area of Sure Start Leominster and Kington. Rather than cover a clearly defined and contained area, this programme covers 132 square miles of predominantly rural farming land, perhaps creating a degree of confusion amongst local residents as to whether they are indeed covered by the programme or not. This is bound to be a particularly relevant concern in regions around the long border areas of the designated programme catchments, made more so as these borders are not easy to define.

1.2.2 Questionnaire design

The survey administered during this consultation was closely based on the questionnaire used during the original 2000 consultation designed by Herefordshire PCT. M.E.L Research made some alterations to enhance the workability of the questionnaire, in consultation with Sure Start Leominster and Kington, whilst ensuring that the comparability of this survey with the original

consultation was not affected. An additional purpose of this 2003/4 evaluation was to register additional parents and carers as a Sure Start parent.

The final questionnaire included similar questions to 2000 on:

- Uptake and satisfaction with local services
- Potential improvements to perceived under-performing services
- Barriers to uptake of services
- Impact of Sure Start on the ability of families to access local services
- Additional services which are needed within the programme area.

The questionnaire also included demographic questions such as age, gender and ethnicity. The questionnaire incorporated a combination of closed and more qualitative open-ended questions. At the end of the survey, a telephone number was requested, so a random callback could be made on at least 10% of completed questionnaires to ensure the interview had been carried out properly.

Finally, a set of showcards was designed to complement the questionnaire. These facilitated the ease and speed of completion of the questionnaire for respondents.

1.2.3 Sampling

A range of different approaches to interviewing were adopted in recognition of the vast geographical area covered by Sure Start Leominster and Kington.

Door to Door interviewing

A number of parents and carers who are members of the Sure Start local programme were contacted by Sure Start Leominster and Kington to establish whether they would like to take part in this survey. By permission, the addresses of those people who wished to take part in the interviewing were passed onto M.E.L Research interviewers. These researchers were asked to visit each of these contacts, keeping a log of the houses called out and whether possible respondents were in or out. Interviewers returned to those houses at which no response was obtained, at a different time of the day up to three times.

On Street Interviewing

To complement the door-to-door approach described above, we adopted an on street interviewing approach. Due to the rural nature of the programme area, on street interviewing was concentrated in some of the more urban areas across the area. Interviews took place in three areas spread evenly across the programme, all believed to be accessed by the majority of those living in the rural areas of the programme. These were:

- Leominster
- Pembridge
- Kington

'Hard to reach' groups

The final approach was designed to access the views of the travelling community in Herefordshire. Interviewers made a visit to a travellers' site in the Pembridge ward on 9th March 2004 on the SS Explorer bus to carry out interviews with members of the travelling community who were eligible to take part in the survey.

1.2.4 Ethical issues

In order to comply with the requests of Sure Start Leominster and Kington, each researcher employed to carry out interviewing on the project was required to undergo a standard CRB check.

A child protection procedure was drawn up and agreed between M.E.L Research and Sure Start Leominster and Kington to ensure that the interviewers had a protocol to follow in the unlikely event of their witnessing anything of concern during the course of the interviewing.

1.3 Analysis

The results are considered overall, as well as by the profile of respondents including age, gender and whether children have any disabilities or special educational needs. Results will also be analysed by area to assess whether perceptions and uptake of services vary depending on the area of residence of respondent. The programme area has been divided into three areas, using a system of grouping parishes to enable more meaningful results to be extracted. These areas are broken down as follows:

Area 1- Kington area- incorporates parishes of

- Brilley
- Huntington
- Kington Rural
- Kington Urban
- Lower Harpton
- Knill
- Rodd, Nash and Little Brampton
- Titley
- Lyonshall
- Staunton on Arrow

Area 2- Pembridge area – incorporates parishes of

- Pembridge
- Eardisland
- Dilwyn
- Monkland and Stretford

Area 3- Leominster area – incorporates parishes of

- Leominster
- Birley with Upper Hill

Any percentages presented in the report will be expressed as a valid percentage, that is the proportion of respondents who answer each particular question.

1.4 Conclusions and recommendations

After the analysis had been completed, an initial report incorporating a set of recommendations was drafted and sent to Sure Start Leominster and Kington. As independent researchers, M.E.L would not be expected to be aware of the full range of activities undertaken by the programme. As a result, Sure Start Leominster and Kington provided a response to the recommendations, where they thought necessary, to produce a more comprehensive picture of activity. The recommendations were subsequently amended in light of this information. These recommendations are discussed in Chapter 7.

1.5 Format of the report

The findings of the user satisfaction consultation are discussed in the remainder of the report. Chapter 2 presents a profile of the parents/carers consulted during the study. Chapter 3 assesses patterns of use of services in the programme area as well as discussing levels of satisfaction with services. In Chapter 4 we look at any barriers that prevent uptake of services, whilst Chapter 5 investigates the impact that Sure Start Leominster and Kington has had on the lives of families with young children. Finally, Chapter 6 presents some suggested improvements that could be made to enhance service provision in the programme area and Chapter 7, the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the consultation.

2. Profile of respondents

This first chapter of this report examines the demographics of those parents and carers taking part in the survey, as well as their area of residence within the programme.

2.1 Profile of respondents

- The majority of parents/carers taking part in the survey were female (93%), with 7% of the sample male (n=11)
- In terms of age, respondents were generally concentrated in the 21-30 year and 31-40 year age bands. Forty five percent were aged between 21-30 years, with a further 40% aged 31-40 years. This was followed by the 16-20 years age group, which included 9% (n=13) of the total respondents. Five percent of respondents were aged between 41-50 years (n=7), with 1% respectively aged under 16 years (n=2) and 61-70 years (n=1).
- When describing their ethnic origin, 100% of respondents described themselves as 'White'. The majority of these were 'White British' (93%); with 4% (n=6) 'White Irish' and 3% (n=5) 'White Other'.

2.1.1 Eligibility for survey

- The vast majority of respondents were a parent or carer of children aged 0 to 3 years 11 months at the time of the interview; this accounted for 99% of the total sample.
- Twenty percent (n=30) of respondents were expecting to become a parent at the time of the consultation

2.1.2 Area of residence

As outlined in Section 1.3, the programme area was divided into three groupings of parishes. The results indicate that the vast majority of interviewees originated from the Leominster area- this accounts for 75% (n=113) of the respondents. Of these, the great proportion were from the Leominster Parish. Far fewer respondents from the two remaining areas were identified, with 14% (n=21) from the Kington area and 5% (n=8) from the parishes around and including Pembridge and the nearby travellers' site. The remaining 8 respondents did not provide details of their parish of residence.

2.1.3 Children with disabilities or special needs

- Six percent (n=9) of parents and carers interviewed had at least one child with a disability or a special educational need.

2.1.4 Registered Sure Start parents

The results indicate that Sure Start Leominster and Kington has reached a very high proportion of families with young children in the programme area.

- Eighty one percent of parents/carers consulted were already registered members of Sure Start Leominster and Kington.

- A further 45% of those parents and carers who were already registered with Sure Start were able to provide their family reference number.
- Just under one fifth of respondents were not registered with Sure Start Leominster and Kington
- Of those respondents who were not already registered as a Sure Start parent/carer, 70% (n=19) wished to sign up as a registered parent and provided their details to enable them to do so.

Registration with Sure Start does appear to show a degree of variation by the profile of respondents.

- Male respondents were shown to be most likely to be registered as a Sure Start parent- this applied to 91% of men consulted (n=10), compared to 80% of female respondents.
- Rates of registration generally demonstrated a negative correlation with age; as age increases likelihood of registration shows a decrease. For example, amongst respondents aged between 16-20 years, 92% were registered as a Sure Start parent (n=12). This fell to 76% of those aged 31-40 years.
- Finally, examining the results by area we can see that registration rates are highest in Leominster and surrounding parishes (83%) and the Kington area (81%, n=17). This falls to just 50% in the Pembridge area (n=4).

2.1.5 Participation in previous survey

A minority of respondents had taken part in the original 2000 survey- this applied to just 13% (n=20) of those parents and carers consulted. A further 5% (n=8) of respondents were unsure as to whether they had done so, with the majority (81%) stating that they had not been involved in the previous survey. This figure may be disproportionately high due to the long period of time which has elapsed since the previous survey, making it less likely that respondents would recall involvement in this study.

Of those respondents who were aware of taking part in the previous survey, 18% (n=3) reported having had another baby since that time.

3. Uptake and satisfaction with services

One of the key aims of the consultation was to establish levels and patterns of use of services within the programme area, as well as levels of satisfaction with these services. In this Chapter we also aim to identify any areas for improvement to be made to the services that were not perceived to be adequately meeting the needs of local families.

3.1 Uptake of services

Respondents were provided with a list of services available in the Leominster and Kington programme area and asked to indicate which of these services they had used. The full results are displayed in Figure 3.

3.1.1 Most commonly used services

The most commonly used services were generally found to be the main statutory health services, as well as shops and childcare facilities. The top ten most commonly used services are displayed below in Table 1.

Table 1: The 10 most commonly used services in the programme area and associated levels of satisfaction

Service	Proportion of respondents who have used this service	Proportion of respondents who had used each service who were very or quite satisfied with provision
Doctor	95%	99%
Health Visitor	86%	96%
Midwife	77%	96%
Maternity Unit	56%	92%
Shops	54%	92%
Nursery	53%	97%
Library	43%	100%
Parent and Baby groups	37%	98%
Public transport	36%	87%
Play areas	33%	90%

Almost all of those parents and carers consulted (95%) had used a Doctor (this is shown to be the most commonly used service), followed by Health Visitors (86%) and Midwives (77%). Over half of respondents had also used the Maternity Unit, and shops. In terms of childcare facilities, 53% and 37% of respondents had used nurseries and Parent and Baby groups respectively (with a further 30% using Parent and Toddler Groups). Over a third of respondents had used libraries (43%), with just over a third having used public transport (36%).

3.1.2 Least commonly used services

Focussing on the services that were least commonly accessed by respondents, the results indicate that these tend to be some of the more specialised services, including specific advice and support services.

Table 2 reveals that respondents were found to be least likely to access DASH (Drugs and Alcohol Support Herefordshire) and Genetic Counselling services (just 1%, n=1 and 2%, n=3 of respondents had used these two services respectively). This is unsurprising taking into account the highly targeted nature of these services. Just 4% and 5% respectively (n=8 and n=7) of respondents had accessed the support services provided by both the Disabilities Support Group and Social Services. Uptake of services providing information and advice on welfare and benefits was also relatively low, with no more than 7% (n=11) of respondents accessing these two facilities. Other services with a lower uptake included church based groups (7%, n=11), Parent Craft lessons (10%, n=14) and Dieticians (6%, n=9).

Table 2: The 10 least commonly used services in the programme area and associated levels of satisfaction

Service	Proportion of respondents who have used this service	Proportion of respondents who had used each service who were very or quite satisfied with provision
DASH or other drugs services	1% (n=1)	100% (n=1)
Genetic Counselling	2% (n=3)	100% (n=3)
Disabilities support groups	4% (n=6)	100% (n=6)
Welfare rights	5% (n=8)	100% (n=8)
Social Services	5% (n=8)	87% (n=7)
Dietician	6% (n=9)	89% (n=8)
Church based groups	7% (n=11)	100% (n=11)
Benefits agency	7% (n=11)	91% (n=10)
Counselling	9% (n=13)	92% (n=12)
Parent Craft Lessons	10% (n=14)	92% (n=13)

Finally, respondents were asked to identify any other services that they had used, which were not already listed in the survey. Only four other responses were recorded. Two parents consulted named Sure Start and one further respondent mentioned use of Sure Start maternity grants. Finally, one participant indicated that they had used swimming facilities.

3.1.3 Uptake of services by profile of respondent

Uptake of services does not appear to show any trends when linked to the age or the gender of the respondent. Overall uptake of services does appear to be slightly higher amongst female than male respondents, but this is a pattern that does vary depending on the service in question. Taking into account the low number of men consulted in this survey, this cannot be taken to be meaningful.

Some patterns are observable, however, when uptake of services is correlated with parents with children with a special educational need or disability. Contact with health and support services is shown to be consistently higher amongst parents who have at least one child with a special educational need or disability. For example, whilst 67% (n=6) of parents with a child with a disability/special educational need had used a Paediatrician, this applies to just 25% of the remainder of respondents. Uptake of other health services such as consultants (67%, n=6 compared to 20%, n=28) and speech therapists (56%, n=5 compared to 11%, n=15) was also considerably higher amongst families with a child with a disability or special educational need. In terms of support services, these families were particularly likely to have accessed counselling services, Home Start, and Disabilities Support Group. Fifty six percent (n=5) of parents with at least one child with a disability or special educational need had used this latter service, compared to less than 1% (n=1) of the remaining respondents.

The results were also analysed by area of residence of each respondent, using the three areas as outlined in Section 1.3. The results do not show a general trend of higher uptake of services in any one particular area. Instead, this varies by the service/facility in question.

Uptake of different health services varied considerably by area. For example, whilst just 62% (n=13) of respondents in the Kington area had accessed a midwife, this figure rose to 80% in the Leominster area. Conversely, uptake of a Paediatrician was considerably higher outside Leominster. In Pembridge 38% (n=3) of respondents had accessed this service, whilst the corresponding figure in Leominster was just 26% (n=29).

Uptake of general support services appears higher amongst families living in the Leominster area of the programme. Sixteen percent (n=17) and 13% (n=12) of respondents from this area had accessed Home Start and counselling services respectively. This compares to 0% of respondents in both Pembridge and Kington. This may represent problems with accessibility of support services in these two areas of the programme.

Moving onto childcare services, uptake of services appears to be consistently higher outside the Leominster area. For example, just 26% (n=29) of parents in Leominster had used Parent and Toddler groups, compared to 50% (n=4) in Pembridge. Uptake of nursery facilities was highest in the Kington area (67%, n=14, compared to 53% in Leominster). Uptake of childminders and playgroups was also highest in Pembridge and Kington. Finally, uptake of play areas in Kington (48%, n=10) and Pembridge (50%, n=4) was almost double that of uptake in Leominster (28%, n=31). These are perhaps surprising statistics as we may initially expect service uptake to be lower in the Pembridge area and higher in Leominster due to issues around access and transportation. However, it is important to recognise that the numbers involved are generally low, particularly in the Pembridge area, and therefore may not be fully representative of the situation in this locality.

3.2 Satisfaction with services

Parents and carers were asked to rate their satisfaction with each service that they had used, using a 4 point scale, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 4, very satisfied. Levels of satisfaction for each of the services are displayed in Figure 4,

with levels of satisfaction for both the most commonly and least commonly used services shown in Table 1 and 2.

3.2.1 Services with high levels of satisfaction

In general, satisfaction with the individual services identified in Section 3.1 was extremely high. Twelve of the 33 services attracted a full 100% satisfaction rating from the parents and carers consulted (i.e. 100% of respondents were very or quite satisfied with the service received). These services included specialised support services such as DASH (n=1) and Disabilities Support groups (n=6), general information and advice services including Welfare Rights (n=8) and the Citizens Advice Bureau (n=25), as well as local crèches (n=25), library and information services.

On a cautionary note, uptake of some of the services above was very low (such as DASH and Welfare Rights), and as a result these perceptions of provision are based on a very small number of users. As a result the figures may not be representative of the wider base of service users. Despite this, it is undoubtedly an encouraging statistic.

Focussing specifically on services that were shown to be widely used (see Table 1), we can see that levels of satisfaction are still extremely high. Satisfaction with the services provided by GPs, libraries, nurseries, Health Visitors, Midwives as well as Parent and Baby groups was found to be over 95% in every case (over 95% of respondents were very or quite satisfied with local provision). These figures suggest that services provided within the programme area are currently meeting the needs of the vast majority of local families.

In terms of the 'other' services identified by respondents in Section 3.1.2, we can see that satisfaction is again very high. Two respondents indicated that they used Sure Start services. One of these consultees was 'very satisfied', with the other 'fairly satisfied' with provision. The respondent using the Sure Start Maternity Grant scheme was 'very satisfied' with the service. Finally, the respondent who reported that they had used swimming facilities revealed that they were 'quite satisfied' with the standard of provision.

3.2.2 Services with lower levels of satisfaction

As illustrated in Figure 4, satisfaction with all services provided in the programme area was very high. In the case of each of the 33 services listed, over 80% of respondents who had used each service was very or quite satisfied with levels of provision.

Despite this overall picture, some services did attract a visibly lower satisfaction rating than average; these are discussed below. It is worth stressing that levels of satisfaction with these services are still high, however.

- Housing (19%, n=5, of respondents who had used this service were dissatisfied, with 7% of these very dissatisfied)
- Public transport (13%, n=6, were dissatisfied, with 5% very dissatisfied)
- Social Services (13%, n=1, were dissatisfied, with all of these being very dissatisfied)
- Play areas (11%, n=5, were dissatisfied, 2% were very dissatisfied)

- Benefits agency (11%, n=1, were dissatisfied, all of these were quite dissatisfied)
- Dietician (11%, n=1, were dissatisfied, all of which were quite dissatisfied)

Again, for some of these services levels of uptake were low, and so these ratings are based on a small number of responses. It may, therefore, not be appropriate to make wider inferences about provision from these perceptions.

3.2.3 Satisfaction with services by profile of respondent

Any patterns or trends in the satisfaction levels of parents and carers when correlated with profiles of respondents are difficult to establish, due to the low number of responses involved. Numbers of responses are such that drawing inferences from the data would not be a meaningful exercise. Despite this, no particular trends are identifiable when we consider the age, gender, ethnicity of respondents, or whether they have a child with a special educational need or disability. The same is true when the results are correlated by area of residence.

3.2.4 Perceptions of services with lower levels of satisfaction

Those parents/carers who reported that they were either very or quite dissatisfied with the individual services assessed above, were asked to provide their reasons for these poor perceptions. Responses are discussed below for the different services.

Health services

Whilst satisfaction with health services was generally extremely high, some respondents did identify aspects of provision with which they were dissatisfied. Firstly, six respondents identified problems with the service provided by midwives. Two respondents revealed that they experienced poor relationships with their midwives, which was in one case attributed to the lack of continuity of care. They called for midwives to be '*more friendly*' and for greater continuity of care, allowing for relationships to build up between parents and midwives. Another respondent highlighted a lack of information given to parents/carers by midwives, and believed that more information should be made available. One response also brought into question the experience of professionals, with two respondents calling for improved training for staff. The remainder of respondents criticised the service as '*poor*' and questioned its accessibility.

Four respondents commented on the service provided by Health Visitors. Two of these parents/carers were dissatisfied with the lack of contact between families and their Health Visitor explaining that this prevents a good relationship building up between the two parties. Other responses related to the lack of training of Health Visitors and the perceived shortfall in support that they provide. In terms of how the service could be improved, respondents suggested that Health Visitors need to have more contact with families, '*spend more time with people*' and should receive better training. One respondent did suggest that Sure Start Leominster and Kington had gone some way to improve things for parents however, allowing parents and carers to go to their health team to ask for advice.

Six respondents identified concerns with the Maternity Unit. The comments made by these parents showed a consistent pattern- with four respondents highlighting

the poor care that they felt they had received and the lack of personal attention given to parents. Some respondents felt that they were '*ignored*' by staff, whilst others were left without any painkillers. One respondent attributed this to the workload of staff. Other criticisms included staff being '*too impatient with me*' and the separation of mothers from their children after birth. Suggested improvements to these services included higher staffing levels, professionals to '*listen more*' and to give each parent '*more personal attention*'. Finally one respondent emphasised that mothers should be placed in the same ward as their children wherever possible.

Other health services discussed by respondents included doctors and consultants. Just one respondent criticised local doctors, stating that they did not like to do home visits, and a more '*personal*' service was needed. Three respondents referred to consultants. Two were unhappy about the '*length of waiting lists*', suggesting that those people who miss their appointments should be charged. The other respondent complained about the '*brisk*' manner of the consultant and called for '*more attention*' in the future.

Support services

Levels of satisfaction with support services listed in the survey were, again, extremely high, with very few services gaining any dissatisfied ratings from parents/carers. Just three respondents were dissatisfied with any aspects of these services.

One respondent highlighted concerns with counselling services, actually stating that the contact '*makes me worse*', and calling for greater understanding from professionals. Another comment was made relating to Social Services, which again called for greater understanding and more relevant advice to be provided to families. Finally, a criticism was made of the lack of speech therapists and therapy time at local clinics. It was suggested that more professionals need to be taken on in this capacity, as the standard of the service provided was generally felt to be very high.

Leisure services

Four respondents highlighted problems with provision of local play areas. Two of these criticised these areas as '*really dirty*' with broken glass. The other two comments referred to the lack of play areas in the area, explaining that some of these had been closed down. In terms of improvements to these facilities, three respondents suggested that local play areas should be cleaned up, whilst two called for an increase in the number of such facilities provided.

Another two respondents explained that they were dissatisfied with leisure activities in general in the programme area. Both respondents explained that there '*is not enough for families and young children*', with no pool and a general lack of crèches and a gym. It was felt that businesses should be encouraged to set up in the area and offer more child-friendly services.

Childcare facilities

A total of six responses were made which explained reasons for the poor perceptions of childcare services.

Just one response was made in relation to Parent and Toddler groups. This explained that there was a real *'lack of things to do'* at the sessions, and poor facilities provided. This parent believed that these facilities should receive more funding to allow provision to be improved. Another comment referred to playgroups, criticising the service in general, in particular the *'impatient'* staff.

Two respondents raised concerns about the current service provided by local childminders. These services were not believed to be affordable and questions were also raised about the standards of care provided. In terms of service improvement, parents called for more affordable childcare and better care provided.

The highest numbers of comments were made in relation to nursery provision. These comments were mixed. One respondent complained about staff who *'did not tell the truth'*, whilst another was concerned about the lack of personal attention from the nursery staff. This latter point was cited as a necessary area for improvement in the future.

Public transport

Seven parents/carers raised concerns about the standard of public transport provision in the area. The major complaint appeared to be the lack of bus provision, with three respondents explaining that there are simply *'not enough buses'*. Trains were also criticised due to the lack of ramps between the platforms. Two further respondents were dissatisfied with the experience of travelling on public transport, describing facilities as *'dirty and smelly'* and raising concerns about fellow service users. Finally, one respondent described the *'poor service'* overall.

Suggested improvements to transport included the provision of more bus services as well as ramps at train stations.

Shops

Reflecting the rural nature of the programme area, 3 respondents explained that there are *'not enough shops'* in their local area, with one stating that there are *'no shops in the village'*. Another parent/carer consulted criticised the choice of shops available locally, and a further response called into question the quality of these facilities. In terms of improvements to this aspect of provision, four respondents all agreed that there was a need to open more shops.

Other services

Other services referred to by parents and carers were local housing services, the Benefits Agency and lastly, Parent Craft Groups. Of these services, housing attracted 5 responses; this represented the highest rate of dissatisfaction with any service in the programme area (19%). One parent referred to the poor treatment they had received personally; *'they took me off the list'*. Two explained that there is just *'not enough housing'*, and a very overcrowded system. Other responses included *'they band people wrongly'*, with one parent unhappy that they live in the area at all. When asked how the service could be improved, respondents suggested cleaning up empty housing.

Additionally, one parent consulted criticised communication within the Benefits Agency, explaining that '*basically the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing*'. They called for increased communication between professionals.

Finally, one respondent who indicated that they had used Parent Craft Groups and were dissatisfied with the service experience explained why this was the case. This respondent pointed out that the service was not satisfactory as '*they (the Midwives) didn't show up*' and classes were cancelled as a result.

4. Barriers to uptake of services

This next sphere of investigation aimed to assess whether there are any barriers that currently prevent the uptake of particular services by families with young children in this rural programme area, and to establish the nature of these barriers preventing access to services.

4.1 Inaccessible services

The results indicate that only few respondents believe that there are barriers that prevent their access of any of the services listed in the questionnaire. In a rural area such as this it could be reasonably expected that there would be issues in terms of access to service and transportation. This does not appear to be the case in the context of the Leominster and Kington programme area, however. Of the parents/carers consulted, just 4% (n=6) identified services that they would have liked to access but were unable to do so.

This could be attributed to the high proportion of respondents originating in either the Leominster or Kington Urban parishes, residing closer to the centres of service provision in these small towns than many of those in more isolated rural locations within the Leominster and Kington programme area.

Respondents who explained that they were unable to access some of the services listed in the survey, were asked to indicate which service(s) that they were unable to access. The results were as follows:

- Crèche (2 respondents were unable to use this service, but would have liked to have done so)
- Leisure activities (n=1)
- Shops (n=1)
- Gym facilities (n=1)
- Swimming pool (n=1)

4.2 Barriers to these services

The respondents who were unable to access the services above were asked to describe the nature of the barriers to their uptake of services. Whilst the affordability of services locally do form barriers to uptake, the results indicate that, more important is the lack of availability of particular services in the local area, rendering them inaccessible for families with young children.

4.2.1 Availability of services

Two parents consulted through this survey indicated that they were unable to access a crèche although they would have liked to do so, due to a lack of availability of this service. Of these, one respondent from the Kington area explained that there is no crèche in Kington. The other respondent who was a resident in the Leominster area also expressed the need for a crèche in their local area.

Another respondent explained that they were unable to use swimming facilities due to the lack of a pool locally.

4.2.2 Affordability of services

One respondent also indicated that they were unable to access the local shop facilities due to the cost of these services. This parent believed that these services need to lower their prices.

4.3 Perceived importance of services

Finally, those respondents who felt unable to use the services above were asked to indicate how important this additional help would have been to them and their family. All of those responding to this question indicated that the help that would have been provided by these services would have been either essential (67%, n=4) or very helpful (33%, n=2). This implies that these barriers may have quite an impact on the lives of those who they affect.

The remainder of parents and carers consulted felt that they were able to access all of the services discussed in the survey, including the main statutory health services, information and advice services, childcare facilities and support services. This is another positive reflection on the level of service provision within the programme area, taking into account its rurality. Again, it may be reflective of the high number of respondents who were resident in the less isolated areas covered by Sure Start Leominster and Kington.

5. Impact of Sure Start Leominster and Kington

This section of the consultation aims to identify the impact of Sure Start Leominster and Kington on the lives of families with children under 4 years of age within the programme area. This focussed specifically on the difference that Sure Start had made in helping families to access any of the services provided in the programme area.

5.1 Impact of Sure Start

The results suggest that Sure Start Leominster and Kington has made a difference to the majority of respondents consulted in this survey. Overall, 73% of respondents indicated that Sure Start had made a difference in terms of their ability to access any of the services discussed in the questionnaire. Just over a quarter of respondents believed that Sure Start had made no difference to their ability to access local services (27%).

Parents and carers who indicated that Sure Start had made a difference to them were asked to explain which service Sure Start had made a difference to their access to, and provide the reasons for this. The results demonstrate that Sure Start Leominster and Kington has enabled families in the area to access a wide range of different services as a result of the programme. These services range from childcare, advice and support services as well as a range of leisure and health facilities. A summary of the services which Sure Start have helped local families to access is displayed in Figure 5, and again, by area in Figure 6.

5.1.1 Childcare

The results indicate that Sure Start Leominster and Kington has considerably improved access to childcare facilities, with the majority of respondents indicating that these were the services that Sure Start had enabled them to access. This fulfils one of the core requirements of a Sure Start local programme.

Nursery

Of these childcare services, the majority of responses related to nursery facilities. Twenty respondents (one fifth of those respondents who reported that Sure Start had made an impact on their lives) indicated that Sure Start had enabled them to access these services. This appears to be particularly important in the Kington area, where a disproportionately high eight respondents mentioned nursery facilities. This represents 38% of respondents from this area of the programme. A further two respondents in Pembridge referred to this, with the remaining ten parents and carers residing in the Leominster area. The responses were very positive, praising this *'great service'*:

Sure Start 'helped me get my son into nursery'

'Got my boy into nursery'

'Sure Start paid for it (wouldn't have been able to go otherwise), I'm very happy'

Particularly popular was the general *'advice on placements'* provided by Sure Start, as well as the *'help with fees'* that make nursery places *'inexpensive with Sure Start'*.

As well as mentioning the impact that Sure Start had on their ability to access this aspect of provision, the respondents also had positive comments to make about the effect that access to this service had had on their lives. It is clearly an important resource for working parents, with one respondent explaining *'I can now go to work'*. It was felt to be important to local parents and carers in the sense that it gives them *'more time for myself'*.

Parent and Toddler groups

Sure Start had enabled ten of those parents and carers consulted to access Parent and Toddler groups; this represents 10% of those who believed that Sure Start had made a difference to accessibility of services. Despite the overall lower uptake identified in Section 3.1.3, this was found to be most important to parents in the Leominster area, where nine respondents mentioned these groups. These respondents all identified Sure Start as the reason that they were able to access Parent and Toddler groups, and explained that there were many benefits to being able to do so. Firstly, there is the clearly important social function of these groups for parents and carers. Respondents explained that such groups had *'got me out of the house'* and that it *'was good to chat and meet other parents'*. Groups were also thought to be important as a source of advice and support, as well as having positive benefits for the children themselves- allowing them to interact with other children thus promoting their social development. Finally, one respondent indicated that the groups were generally enjoyable for all involved and that the *'activities are fun'*.

Playgroups

A further eleven respondents reported that they had been better able to access playgroups, including *'baby groups'* and *'craft session playgroups'* as a result of Sure Start or any of its services. This appears to be equally important in all areas of the programme, with three respondents in Kington and one in Pembridge mentioning these facilities.

Playgroups were thought to have similar social and developmental benefits to the Parent and Toddler groups outlined above, allowing parents to *'to meet other mums'* and giving children the *'chance to interact'*. They also enable parents to protect some *'time out for myself'*, providing a session of respite care.

Crèche

Nine respondents explained that Sure Start had allowed them to better access crèche facilities. Two parents in Kington and a further seven in Leominster mentioned this. No respondents in the Pembridge area reported that Sure Start had made a difference to their crèche access.

Three respondents specifically mentioned the crèche facilities provided at gym sessions on a Friday and at *'keep fit'* classes. Again, perceptions of these facilities in general, were overwhelmingly positive, with one respondent describing them as *'brilliant!'* They were thought to be a great help to parents and carers, giving them *'more free time'* and *'making life easier'*, with one respondent explaining; *'it helps having your own time to do things'*. As highlighted above they

also enabled parents to access leisure facilities and exercise sessions, which they may not otherwise have been able to use without this provision.

Finally, an additional two respondents mentioned the help that Sure Start had provided with childcare in general. One parent in Kington explained that they had received *'childcare help'*, which had enabled them to attend a training course. Another respondent talked about the general help and advice that Sure Start had provided relating to childcare provision, and the difference that this had made to their ability to access services.

5.1.2 Support

A secondary theme to emerge from the results was the importance of Sure Start Leominster and Kington in helping local families to access help and support. Although two respondents in Kington mentioned this, it was shown to be particularly relevant to parents and carers in the Leominster area (16 respondents). No aspect of support was mentioned by any parent or carer in the Pembridge area.

Six respondents mentioned Home Start in particular, and the help and support that this service had provided to them. One respondent from the Leominster area explained that Home Start had enabled them to make *'a positive start'* as they *'helped me to set up home'*. Another reported how *'Home Start bought a volunteer into my home'*. All those who had accessed this service perceived this service to be very positive aspect of provision.

The remaining ten respondents mentioned the counselling services that Sure Start had provided, as well as the support offered by Sure Start's Family Support Workers. The counselling service provided by Sure Start was widely felt to be a vital service by those parents that had used it, including those with a premature child and post-natal depression. Comments included:

'Advice on parenting helped me cope'

'Counselling was great'

'It helped me though postnatal depression'

A number of parents singled out Sure Start's Family Support Workers for particular praise. The advice and support provided by staff was felt to be invaluable, helping parents to cope in difficult situations and providing useful advice on parenting. Respondents explained:

'The family support worker helped me through early parenthood'

'The family support worker helped with my parenting'

Sure Start staff appeared to be a popular resource in their own right, with a number of respondents mentioning representatives of the programme by name.

5.1.3 Information and advice

In addition to the general support provided by Sure Start, 15 parents also explained that Sure Start had helped them to better access advice and information on a range of subjects. This area of provision was found to be important to parents across the whole programme area, including those in

Pembridge and its surrounding parishes where two respondents mentioned information and advice facilities.

One of the most important areas of information for many local parents was on the services provided for families with young children in the area. One parent from Pembridge explained that they *'give you information and let you know what is available, when and where it is'*; they are good at *'explaining what goes on with facilities'*. Without this information and signposting, parents may be unable to access certain services due to a lack of awareness. Another respondent in Leominster talked about the *'guidance, knowledge and general help'* that Sure Start had given their family. Two respondents from Leominster cited the Sure Start shop as being *'good for advice'*.

Other respondents identified the *'useful'* advice provided by Sure Start on parenting as being extremely important to them, whilst another parent praised the *'advice from key workers and health professionals'*. Other areas of information and advice included *'advice on money matters'*, as well as childcare and housing; *'they helped me get a house'*.

5.1.4 Health services

Although this did not emerge as a major theme, another area of provision, which Sure Start has made more accessible to a number of local families, was found to be health services. This key area was found to be most important to respondents from the Leominster area (11 respondents), with a further one from the Pembridge area. Respondents referred to a range of health services in their responses.

Health Visitors

Five parents and carers indicated that Sure Start had helped to put them in touch with Health Visitors. These professionals gave parents *'good access to information and advice'*. They also provided useful support and day-to-day assistance, including help with shopping.

Midwives

Four respondents, all from the Leominster area, explained that Sure Start had helped parents to better access midwives. All of these four respondents emphasised the importance of the advice and support that these professionals had provided. The midwife gives parents *'reassurance and guidance'* and *'helped with delivery and advice'*. One further respondent explained that *'she (the midwife) is always there when I need her'*.

Speech therapists

Two respondents, again from the Leominster area talked about the help that Sure Start had provided through speech therapy. Both respondents agreed that this service had been very *'beneficial'* for their children; it is *'helping my son a lot'*.

A further two responses referred to a range of other health services in the programme area. One mention was made of antenatal classes, which gave relevant advice to a first time parent. Another parent referred to the postnatal classes available through Sure Start. These were found to be helpful in terms of advice and support from other parents.

5.1.5 Leisure facilities

A relatively low number of respondents (n=7) reported that Sure Start had helped them to access any leisure facilities. Two respondents in Kington and five in the Leominster area mentioned this. The leisure facilities in question covered a wide range of areas. Firstly, three respondents (two of which were resident in the Kington area) praised the crèche facilities available at the gym and certain 'keep fit' classes, which enables parents to make use of these facilities without the worry and expense of finding childcare; *'the childcare has been good'*.

One respondent from Leominster indicated that Sure Start had helped families to go on trips together, for example through the Sure Start arranged trip to Barry Island. The Toy Library was also mentioned, as were the Sure Start trips to swimming baths; this latter service was described as *'very good and relaxing'*. Finally, one respondent explained that Sure Start had helped her to make best use of her leisure time by giving her the opportunity to help out with the Sure Start Youth Project.

5.1.6 Training courses

Training courses were mentioned by three respondents, all of which were from the Kington area of the programme. These parents and carers explained that Sure Start had enabled them to access these training opportunities, whether it was through funding their place or the provision of childcare. The range of courses accessed was unclear, although one parent mentioned a childminding courses.

5.1.7 Other Sure Start services

Nine parents made references to other services provided by Sure Start Leominster and Kington.

Sure Start shop

Four respondents explained that the presence of Sure Start had enabled them to access the Sure Start shop in Leominster. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the location of the shop; all four of these parents and carers resided in the Leominster area. The shop was felt to be a very useful resource for both parents and children alike. Parents explained that it is *'nice for children to play there'* and praised the crèche facilities provided. It also had an important social and advice function for parents, two of which praised the quality of the advice given.

SS Explorer

Three parents consulted in the survey mentioned the SS Explorer bus. This service was shown to be particularly important to those parents and carers in the Pembridge area, perhaps due to its more isolated location. Two respondents from Pembridge and one from Leominster mentioned this aspect of provision. The respondent in Leominster explained that they had *'gone swimming with the bus'*, however this does refer to a mini-bus and not the SS Explorer. In Pembridge the SS Explorer was praised as *'very beneficial'*, it was felt to be particularly important for more isolated areas; *'Sure Start mobile service is good for remote areas'*.

Sure Start Maternity Grant

In addition to the main themes outlined above, a small number of respondents referred to other services, which do not fit into the above categories. For example, two respondents praised the Sure Start Maternity Grant that they had been able to access as a result of Sure Start Leominster and Kington. This service had helped both families to *'pay for essentials'*, although it should be stressed that this grant does not come from the Sure Start local programme, it is provided through Community Midwives from the Benefits Agency.

Another respondent talked about the behavioural therapy that they were able to access through Sure Start. This had *'helped my son to get into school'*. Finally, two respondents mentioned the Sure Start Leominster and Kington programme in general. This was described as a *'good initiative'* overall, *'the idea is very good'*. One parent shared that the initiative had *'increased my confidence'*, particularly through the group sessions.

6. Improvements to provision

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate if there are any other services that they would like to see made available for families with young children in the Sure Start Leominster and Kington programme area. The responses have been themed and are examined below.

6.1 Improvements to service provision

A total of 112 parents/carers recorded a response when asked if there are any other services that they would like to see provided in the programme area for families with young children. Of these respondents, 31 parents stated that they were unsure or had no comment to make. Another 4 respondents stated that they were satisfied with current provision in the area:

'I'm satisfied with what we've got'

'They've got it covered'

The remaining 78 (52%) respondents provided a wide range of suggestions as to how service provision could be enhanced. The results have been themed and are displayed fully in Figure 7. The majority of responses fell into one of two categories- childcare provision or leisure facilities.

6.1.1 Childcare provision

Playgroups and playschemes

The majority of responses in this category referred to the provision of local playgroups and playschemes. Ten respondents called for the provision of an increased number of playgroups and playschemes. This concern was particularly relevant outside Leominster (see Figure 8), with three parents in Kington and two in Pembridge areas mentioning these facilities.

Crèche facilities

Crèche facilities were shown to be a very popular aspect of local provision in Chapter 3, with 100% of those parents who had used the facilities very or quite satisfied with the service received. This was reflected in this area of the consultation again, with five parents/carers consulted calling for *'more crèche facilities'* locally. Two of these respondents specified that crèches should be provided in leisure centres or at the gym.

Four respondents in the Leominster area, and one in the Kington area mentioned this aspect of provision.

Parent and Toddler groups

The results in Section 3.1 indicate that use of Parent and Toddler Groups is relatively low in the Leominster area compared to the Kington and Pembridge areas. Perhaps linked to this trend, three respondents, all of which were from the Leominster area, called for improvements to the provision of local Parent and

Toddler groups. Parents believed that there should be '*more mother and toddler groups*' as well as '*baby groups for second time mums*'. No specific mention was made of groups aimed at fathers.

Other childcare improvements

Only one other comment was made relating to any other aspect of childcare facilities. In Leominster one of the parents consulted called for '*more nurseries*'.

6.1.2 Leisure facilities

The major proportion of suggestions for improvements to services do refer to an increase in the quantity of leisure facilities in the area, aimed specifically for children under 4 years. Some mention was also made of facilities for parents of young children, and facilities for older children and teenagers.

Swimming facilities

By far the greatest number of responses received related to the provision of swimming facilities. In total, 38 parents (48% of those providing a suggestion for service improvement) called for a swimming pool to be provided within the programme area. Of these, five respondents were from the Kington area and the remainder (33 respondents) from the Leominster area.

Play areas

Eleven respondents called for an improvement in the provision of parks and play areas provided in the local area. Seven respondents called for an increased number of parks, play grounds and play areas to be provided, with a further one participant suggesting the provision of '*indoor play areas for when the weather is bad*'. In addition to this, three respondents believed that the existing play areas need to be improved, with one respondent in the Leominster area stating the need for supervised play areas due to the '*drug problems at play site*'.

Two and six parents respectively mentioned this in the Kington and Leominster areas, with just one raising this issue in Pembridge and its surrounding parishes. The remaining two respondents did not indicate their parish of residence.

General play activities

A further seven respondents called for the provision of a range of different play activities in the programme area. Four respondents expressed the need for more '*play activities*' and '*facilities for younger children*' in general. Other suggestions included the provision of a '*local play centre*' and a music group. Two respondents also highlighted the need for the provision of physical exercise facilities including a '*soft play area*' and '*more gym tots*'. The vast majority of these suggestions emerged from Leominster residents.

Other leisure facilities

Two respondents expressed a need for leisure facilities for the parents of young children, such as '*keep fit*' and '*fitness areas*'. As described in Section 6.1.1, these facilities would need to have crèche provision. These two suggestions were both made by residents of the Leominster area.

Finally, a further six respondents believed that there is a shortage of facilities for older children and teenagers in the local area. Parents and carers called for *'more stuff for 10-15 year olds to do'*, *'more for teenagers'* and *'a youth centre for older children'*. Although this is outside the remit for Sure Start Leominster and Kington, it is still clearly an important concern of families with children under four years of age in Leominster and Kington.

6.1.3 Sure Start services

In terms of Sure Start services, three respondents from the Leominster area wanted the opportunity to get involved in *'more trips organised by Sure Start'*.

One further respondent from the Kington area suggested that the advice provided by Sure Start could be given in a more sensitive way, suggesting that there should be a *'private room set aside for advice- there is not enough privacy'*.

6.1.4 Health services

Just two of the responses to this final question referred to health services. One parent suggested that there should be a *'proper maternity and labour ward in Leominster hospital'*, whilst another respondent called for *'better nurses'*.

Whilst these represent the vast majority of responses, remaining comments and suggestions are provided below:

'More support- someone to talk to –more guidance'

'Traffic calming wardens'

'More place to breast feed'

'A community Centre'

'Transport is an issue'

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter presents the key findings of the user satisfaction consultation and incorporates a set of recommendations for future service improvements.

7.1 Conclusions

In conclusion to the consultation with families in the Leominster and Kington programme area, the following key themes have emerged:

- Sure Start Leominster and Kington has reached a high proportion of eligible families with young children in the programme area. Whilst the survey did not measure levels of awareness of Sure Start amongst local people, the good contact with the local community is demonstrated by the fact that over 80% of respondents were already registered as Sure Start parents. This membership rate was found to be highest in the Leominster and Kington areas and amongst the younger parents and carers consulted.
- Satisfaction with individual services provided in the programme area was found to be extremely high. At least 80% of respondents were satisfied with each of the services in question, a very encouraging statistic. Satisfaction with support services was particularly high. Despite this, there is room for improvement in service provision and delivery, particularly for Housing services, public transport and in the provision of local play areas. Reasons for dissatisfaction with these services did often reflect the rural nature of this programme area.
- Despite these potential problems of rurality, a very low proportion of respondents identified any barriers that prevent their uptake of services. When the rural nature of the area is taken into account, this could be seen as rather an unexpected trend. Whilst we may have expected problems of access to emerge, the vast majority of respondents felt that they were able to access all of the services relevant to themselves and their family.
- The consultation revealed that Sure Start Leominster and Kington has made a difference to the lives of the majority of respondents. Almost three quarters of the sample agreed that Sure Start Leominster and Kington had enhanced their access to local services and facilities, and in many cases had made a very positive impact on their lives.
- Sure Start Leominster and Kington has had a key role in helping local parents and carers to better access local childcare facilities, providing benefits for both the parents and children involved. It has also clearly been vital in providing many respondents with enhanced support services. This consultation has also highlighted the importance of Sure Start as a signposting service- helping to raise awareness of existing services as well as being a service provider in itself.
- Another key theme to emerge from the consultation was the potential gap in provision of leisure services in the Leominster and Kington programme area. Existing leisure services did not generally attract high levels of user

satisfaction and it was clear that there was felt to be a real shortage of such facilities locally. It was also apparent that Sure Start had not been so effective in filling this service gap as it had with other areas of provision. The development of high quality play and leisure facilities for both young children and their families should be a key priority for future action for Sure Start Leominster and Kington.

- As a final conclusion to this consultation it should be stressed that due to the responses received and the sample size of the survey, the conclusions above are often based on fairly low numbers of responses. As a result it can be difficult to make inferences from the data, as the responses may in some cases not be fully representative of families with young children in the programme area. Subsequently, the conclusions and recommendations have been based on the general themes that have emerged from the study.
- We would recommend that if this survey was repeated in the future, some changes be made in the design stages to the structure of the questionnaire to allow more detailed information to be generated from the research. We would also suggest that the sample size be increased to allow for greater certainty as to the reliability of results, particularly when dealing with sub sets of the population. A more in-depth, qualitative study would also be advisable, particularly focusing on areas such as perceptions of Sure Start Leominster and Kington, unmet need and access to services. This would create rich information, and also allow for key themes identified through this user satisfaction consultation to be pursued in greater detail.

7.2 Recommendations

Table 3: Key findings and recommendations

Key finding	MEL Recommendations	Sure Start Leominster and Kington response	Amended recommendations
1) Services providing healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Health Visitor provision and caseload • Review and extend Midwife provision • Look into providing regular group sessions/ contact in more informal settings hosted by Midwives • Develop an information pack for new parents, to be distributed by Midwives, involving parents in the design. • Consider providing drop-in advice sessions hosted by Midwives and/or other health professionals at local community centres or Sure Start shops • Practical advice to be provided locally linking into provision of ante natal care • Investigate possibility of a Community Parents scheme • Develop new ways of advertising local support, information and advice services. • Consider providing more speech therapy time in local clinics • Further advertise speech therapy 	<p>Midwife Drop-in sessions run at Sure Start flat, Barons Cross</p>	
a) Health Visitors – parents value regular contact			
b) Midwives- parents value continuity of care and want strong relationships with Midwives			
c) Parents would like to receive more information from Midwives			
d) The speech therapy provision is highly regarded by parents.			

service

Key finding	MEL Recommendations	Sure Start Leominster and Kington response	Amended recommendations
<p>2) Quality of local childcare provision</p>			
<p>a) Respondents called for increased provision of Parent and Toddler groups, particularly in the Leominster area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a mapping exercise and review of local childcare services, provision and signposting mechanisms across the whole patch 		
<p>b) Parent and Toddler Groups are thought to be a very valuable resource, however, questions were raised about facilities available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all childcare facilities, including playgroups, Parent and Toddler groups and crèche facilities are well-advertised and effectively signposted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent and Toddler Groups are provided through the Herefordshire Childcare Information Service (CIS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share results of consultation re: Parent and Toddler Group provision with CIS.
<p>c) Playgroups are popular resources, again, parents called for increased provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out an audit of facilities and activities at Parent and Toddler groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups are provided through the Herefordshire Childcare Information Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If these groups are already provided, publicity and promotion of this service may need to be reviewed.
<p>d) Crèche facilities attracted very high satisfaction scores, however, a real shortage of provision was identified by respondents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate potential for increasing local provision of crèche facilities, playgroups and Parent and Toddler groups 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for mapping exercise of Parent and Toddler groups to ensure that they are accessible to families across the programme area.
<p>e) A shortage of affordable childminders and general childcare facilities was highlighted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review charging system for services where possible • Design information pack to be circulated to parents and carers detailing locally available childcare, including childminders, crèches, nurseries, playgroups and Parent and Toddler Groups. 		

3) Quality of play and leisure facilities

Key finding

MEL Recommendations

**Sure Start Leominster and
Kington response**

Amended recommendations

<p>a) Local play areas- the quantity and quality of provision was brought into question</p> <p>b) Lack of leisure and play facilities for young children highlighted</p> <p>c) There is a very high demand for local swimming facilities to be provided</p> <p>d) Exercise classes for parents are a popular resource, particularly when crèche provision is available</p> <p>e) Local libraries are a popular resource where used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit local availability of leisure and play facilities to include play areas • Share findings of report with Local Authority Leisure Services and make links with appropriate departments • Investigate potential for fenced-off, enclosed spaces for young children in play areas • Investigate potential to extend indoor play facilities • Investigate potential for play sessions at local venues, such as the Sure Start shop and community centres • Advertise and extend provision of Sure Start trips where possible • Assess demand for soft play and physical exercise facilities such as Gym Tots • Liase with Local Authority regarding the provision of age appropriate facilities for young children at the planned swimming baths in Leominster • Advertise and extend Sure Start trips to Ludlow swimming baths where possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive work introducing new play equipment, fencing and other family age appropriate equipment at 'The Grange' play area in Leominster in 2003. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a mapping exercise of play areas across the patch to ensure facilities are accessible to all across the patch. • Investigate potential for similar schemes and facilities as 'The Grange' in other areas of the patch. Parks and play areas are clearly an important concern for local families, and 'The Grange' is unlikely to be accessible to all.
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Key finding**MEL Recommendations****Sure Start Leominster and Kington response****Amended recommendations**

- Ensure that exercise classes are advertised effectively
- Extend provision of fitness classes where possible using local venues e.g. church halls, community centres
- Crèche facilities to be provide with exercise sessions, or times of classes to be synchronised with existing childcare
- Link with Local Authority regarding increased promotion of library facilities
- Organise activities and events at local libraries e.g. Story time sessions
- Fitness classes are being provided by Sure Start, crèche facilities are provided with sessions
- Link in place with the Local Authority re: increased promotion of library facilities
- Sure Start organise and advertise events at local libraries including story time sessions
- Despite existing provision, the results show that there is still demand for exercise facilities. This could be addressed by improving advertising of sessions rather than increasing provision.
- Carry out mapping exercise of fitness classes to ensure they are accessible to all.
- Continue good links with the Local Authority

4) Support, advice and information services

a) Support services are very highly regarded by service users

b) Uptake of support services is considerably lower outside the Leominster area

c) Sure Start Family Support Workers thought to be a very valuable resource by local parents and carers

- Ensure all advice and support services are effectively signposted across the whole patch
- Information about services to be provided in a pack given to parents/carers by Midwives
- Extend provision of Home Start where possible
- Increased promotion of services outside the Leominster area
- Signposting for support and advice services is ongoing
- Home Start work actively across the Sure Start area
- Continue this signposting and ensure that information on support services is targeted at Kington and Pembridge areas of the patch where service uptake is lowest. Look into new ways of promoting services.

Key finding	MEL Recommendations	Sure Start Leominster and Kington response	Amended recommendations
<p>d) Parent Craft Classes are popular where used</p> <p>e) Sure Start is an important source of advice and information for parents with young families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and advice service services to be provided in more isolated areas through the SS explorer. • Maximise contact of Family Support Workers with local parents • Consider provision of regular group sessions held in local venues hosted by Family Support Workers • Production of a regular 'What's on' update providing information on local events and groups. • Look into potential for setting up a more private area at the Sure Start premises for parents who wish to access advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Visits and Group sessions currently provided by Family Support Workers across the patch • Quarterly 'What's On' guide produced and circulated to all parents/guardians of children aged under 4 living in the Sure Start area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Support Workers provide sessions across patch, accessible to all. • Consider provision of drop in groups hosted by Community Parents to ease pressure on Family Support Workers • Despite this 'What's On' guide, results indicated that parents/carers were not aware of all local services. • Look into alternative ways of reaching people e.g. Internet, CD Rom • To ensure that existing guide is as user-friendly as possible, consider involving local parents and carers in a review, critique and possible redesign of the guide. • Publicise groups and events in local schools, community centres and other venues.

5) Other areas of provision

Key finding

a) Some parents raised concerns about the quality of local public transport provision

b) Whilst Sure Start Leominster and Kington has a high rate of membership, this figure was noticeably lower in

MEL Recommendations

- Consider providing transportation to certain groups and events where possible
- Link with community transport agencies
- Investigate potential for a ring and ride scheme
- Increase awareness of Sure Start in Pembridge area - promote service in local venues and via the

Sure Start Leominster and Kington response

- Transport is provided to groups and events as necessary
- Sure Start working closely with local transport schemes

Amended recommendations

- Review at which groups/events transport is provided.
- Continue good working links with local transport providers

the Pembridge area

- SS explorer.
- Review the provision of Sure Start activities across the patch.