



An Evaluation of the Training Provision provided by Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville

April 2004

This report has been produced by Consortium Solutions, a not-for-profit development agency, and has been commissioned by Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville. The aim of the report is to evaluate the training provision currently offered by Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville as part of the programme's Local Evaluation Strategy.

As well as examining the perceptions of stakeholders and the monitoring and evaluation work that has been carried out by the programme, this report will make clear recommendations to Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville on the future of the training provision.

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1. Introduction

The need for training provision as part of the Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville programme was identified in the initial community consultation, which was carried out during the delivery planning stage of the programme's development.

A programme of training provision has been running since September 2003 within Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville. Training courses covering a wide variety of subjects have been offered to parents in the local community. The training is run in conjunction with a crèche and the courses are predominantly during the day, in order to meet the needs of parents.

2. Methodology

The aim of evaluating the training offered by Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville was to find out:

- What the programme offers to parents in terms of training
- Who is currently accessing the training and what impact the training is having on their lives, if any
- How the various stakeholders; Sure Start, the external training providers and the parents who access the training, perceive the service

A variety of research methods have been used to gather this information. These include:

Face-to-Face interviews

We interviewed the Sure Start Community Training Officer on two occasions with the aim of building up a picture of the training provision and the background to the service. We were interested in both the basics of running the service as well as the issues, success, and challenges that have arisen from the provision.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were designed and utilised as a research method for identifying the perceptions and views of both parents and the external training providers. The questionnaires for the external training providers were self-completed and sometimes followed up with a phone interview if there were issues which needed further

clarification. Some of the questionnaires for the parents were self-completed whilst others were filled out by a researcher on a face-to-face basis.

Focus group

A focus group was set up through the Community Training Officer which gave us the opportunity to gain more detailed information from some of the parents on their perceptions of the training provision and the impact they felt that it had had on their lives and the lives of their children. Parents were welcome to bring their children along and the group was conducted from the venue used for the training courses to ensure ease of attendance for parents.

3. Government Objectives and Targets

Clearly, any evaluation of the Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville training provision needs to consider the service in relation to the national objectives and targets for Sure Start set out by the Government. The following objective and target are relevant to the training provision:

Objective 4: strengthening families and communities

PSA Target

By 2004 to reduce by at least 12 per cent the number of 0-3 year old children in Sure Start areas living in households where no one is working.

Response:

Providing a range of courses aimed at improving the confidence and skills of parents making them both more employable and more likely to have the confidence to seek work or further education.

It is imperative that services relate back to this target and as such it should remain at the forefront of the evaluation process.

4. The Provision

Identifying available training, as well as the wants and needs of local parents, was one of the Community Training Officer's first roles. The main aim of the training provision is to get parents into training which either will, or could in the future, lead to employment. The training provision aims to support the local programme's requirements to meet specific national targets as outlined in the previous chapter.

The Community Training Officer has organised a number of training courses including:

- **Computer courses:** 10-week computer courses suitable for all abilities run by L-RAC, a local training provider.
- **Holiday Spanish:** a 3-week taster course to give parents a chance to learn some basic holiday Spanish.
- **Aromatherapy:** a 5-week course.
- **Try Something New,** a 3-week course looking at craft ideas and activities for parents.
- **Christmas Crafts:** a 3-week course helping parents to prepare for the festive season and develop new craft skills.
- **Basic First Aid:** a 5-week course provided by Eastfield Community Education that enables parents to gain a basic qualification in first aid.
- **An Introduction to Sociology:** a 5-week course giving parents the opportunity to develop some knowledge of the basics of sociology

- **Alternative Therapies:** a 3-week course giving parents the opportunity to try aromatherapy, reflexology and Indian Head Massage.
- **Let's Play Together:** a 10-week course run by the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA), which looks at child development and adult interaction with children.
- **An Introduction to Child Psychology:** an 11-week course introducing learners to child psychology.
- **Creating Colour and Texture in Your Home:** a 5-week course on some aspects of interior design.
- **Nail Art:** a 3-week course.
- **Renewing Number Knowledge:** a 3-week course for learners wishing to brush up on their maths.
- **An Introduction to child psychology:** an 11-week course introducing learners to child psychology.

The courses have ranged in length from 3-week 'tasters' to more in depth 11-week programmes. The training providers that the programme has worked with to date include:

- Hull College Community Education
- The Humber Pre-School Learning Alliance
- The WAM (Women and New Media) Project
- Hull City Council Adult Education Service

The training providers have been chosen because of their reputations within other local Sure Start programmes as well as

the Community Training Officer's previous experience of them. The Community Training Officer, after consultation with local parents, will approach a particular training provider with a brief outlining the course that the programme would like to run. From this point, the Community Training Officer and the training provider will be able to negotiate provision, based on what is realistically available, and decide on a course appropriate for the needs of local parents.

Each course is run in 1 hour 59 minute weekly blocks to fit in with the crèche that, as it is not Ofsted registered, can only look after children for 1 hour 59 minutes at a time. The crèche is offered free to parents and is delivered by the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

Parents are encouraged to influence the content of the course and the Community Training Officer has encouraged the involvement of parents by asking them to complete a questionnaire on whether or not they would be interested in attending particular short courses. As an incentive for parents to take part, each completed questionnaire was entered into a prize draw. The Community Training Officer then endeavours to arrange the training courses, beginning with the most popular and working through the list.

Parents are referred to the training provision by Social Services, the Sure Start Play and Learn and Health teams, as well as by more general word of mouth. The Community Training Officer is the first point of contact for parents wishing to undertake training and makes all of the relevant arrangements such as booking a place on the course and organising the crèche.

4.1 Staffing

The Sure Start Community Training Officer has been in post since March 2003 and is employed on a full-time basis working 37 hours a week. The Community Training Officer is employed by Gipsyville Action Centre and line managed by the Sure Start Community Development Worker.

The Community Training Officer's roles and responsibilities include the following:

- Consulting with parents to establish what type of training will meet their needs
- Working with local training providers to establish training courses at times and locations convenient for local parents.
- Organising and designing the publicity material and promotion for the training courses
- All administration involved in running the training including the enrolment process
- Helping parents to overcome barriers to work
- Working closely with employers to match the employer and the job seeker
- Building parent's confidence
- Encouraging parents to mix with other local parents and to access other Sure Start services

5. Monitoring and Internal Evaluation

All Sure Start programmes are required to evaluate and monitor the services that they provide in order to ensure that the programme is having the desired impact on 0-4 year olds and their families in the local area and that the services are of a high quality, are inclusive and are well used.

The Community Training Officer collects feedback from the parents at the end of each course. Parents are asked a number of questions about the quality of the training. These include:

- The quality of slides and presentations
- The quality of handouts
- If the student has learnt anything new through the training
- If the student believed that the training would be beneficial to them
- Which parts of the training the student found most and least informative and why
- Any suggestions for improvements that could be made to the course

Annual monitoring forms which reflect the programme's progress against national objectives and targets are completed by all Sure Start programmes in the September of each year. The suite of monitoring forms completed in September 2003 will be concerned with the period April 2002-March 2003 and so will not reflect any progress made by the training provision. However, as *to reduce*

the number of 0-3 year old children in Sure Start areas living in households where no-one is working by at least 12 per cent, is one of the targets that monitoring data is required to evidence, the training provision should hopefully impact on the monitoring figures in the future. This particular target is one for which the data is collected by the Sure Start Unit.

The registration process, which is used across the programme, enables the monitoring of demographics such as age, ethnicity and gender programme wide. This is complemented by registers, which are completed at each session of individual services, enabling the numbers and details of parents seen each month to be monitored. In terms of the training provision this means that there is a register for each course detailing who attended and how many sessions they were present for. This information is then inputted onto the Pacsis database and contributes to the 'contacts seen' figures.

5.1 Attendance

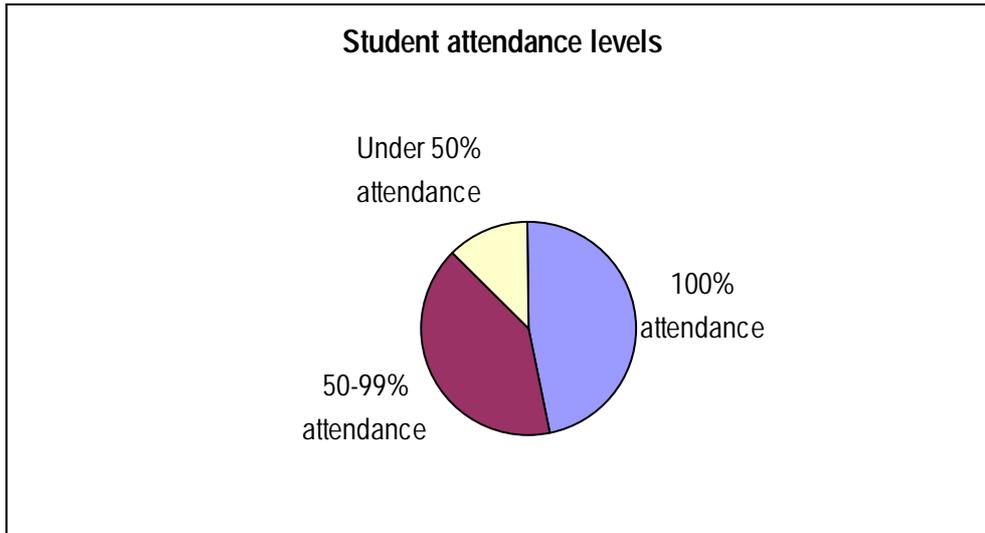
In order to fully consider the impact of the Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville training provision we have analysed the registers from courses completed between September 2003 and March 2004. From this we know that 64 people, including four staff, in total have accessed a training course that has been run by the Sure Start programme in this period. Between them, these 64 people took 137 places on training courses. 55% of these people attended one course, 16% and 17% attended 2 and 3 courses

respectively and 14% attended between 4 and 9 courses (figures are rounded to the nearest percent).

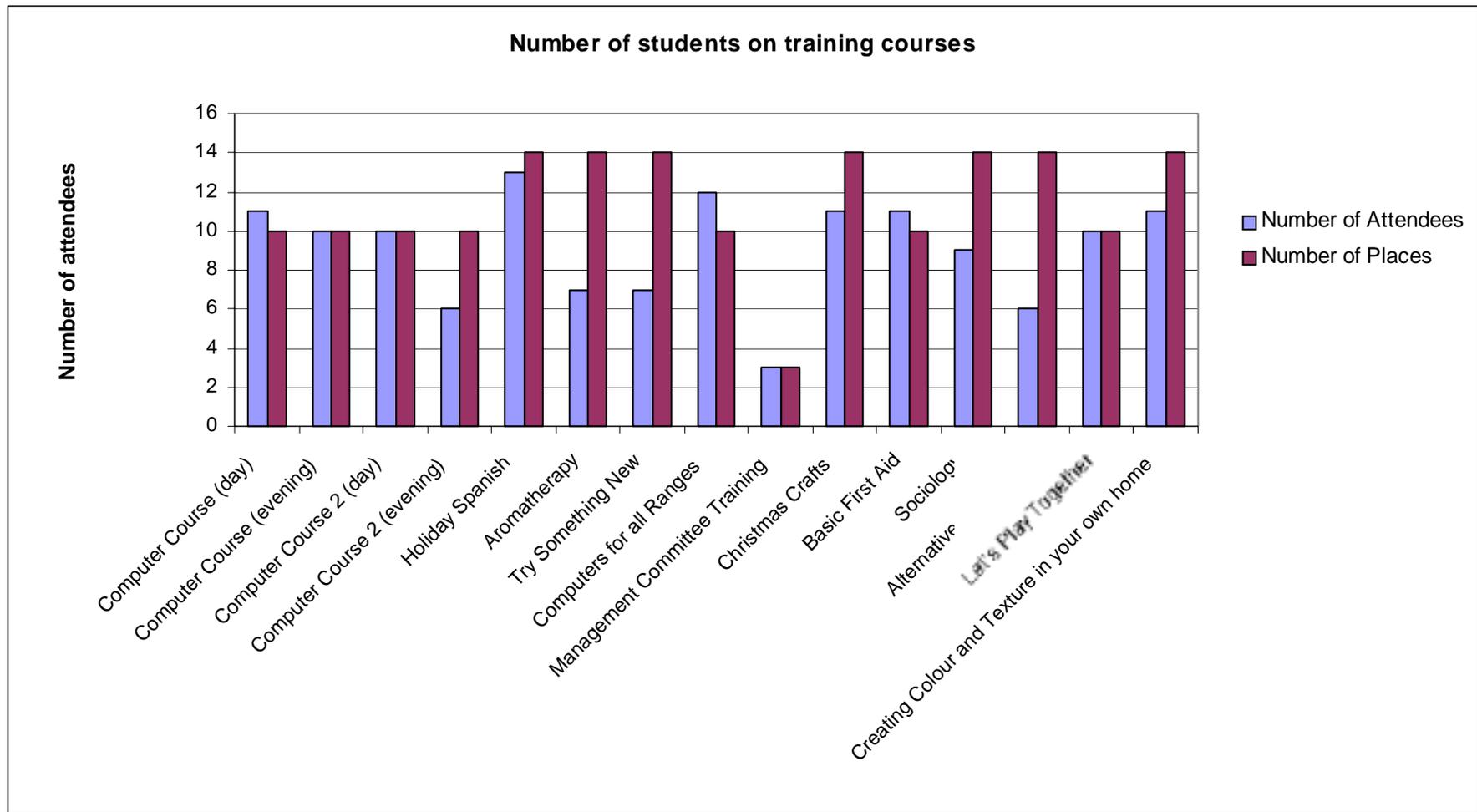
This data demonstrates that a wide base of people is accessing the training. Of the 64 people who have accessed training through the programme, 36 are registered which means that approximately 10% of the parents registered with Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville have accessed a course between 01/09/03 – 31/03/04.

On the whole attendance on the courses has been good with 56 of the 137 places having been occupied by people who attended between 50 and 99% of the sessions on their particular course and 64 attending 100% of the sessions. Only 17 places were occupied by people who attended less than 50% of the sessions and some of these places may have been taken by people who were attending just one session of a particular course as a taster with a view to enrolling onto future training.

It should be noted that attendance is only one element of the training courses and that, particularly with parents who clearly have other demands on their time, completion is often more important than 100% attendance. At 31st March 2004 46 recognised qualifications or completions had been achieved.



A breakdown of the numbers of students that attended each course is provided in the graph on the next page.



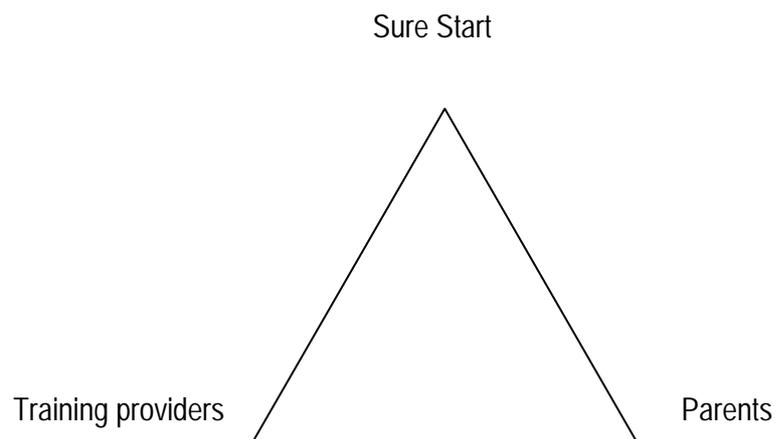
It should be noted that although there are 14 seats available in the Gipsyville training room, places are limited by the crèche. Parents with more than one child needing childcare or a reduced number of crèche workers being available are both factors that can limit the number of children that can be accommodated in the crèche and thus the number of parents that can participate in training.

6. Perceptions of Stakeholders

In order that the evaluation report on the training provision presents a thorough account of the service, it was essential that the views of all of the relevant stakeholders were collected. With this in mind, the evaluators contacted the following:

- The Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville Community Training Officer
- External training providers
- The parents and carers that have accessed the training

As is so often the case with Sure Start services, there is a three-way relationship between the Sure Start programme, a partner agency (or agencies), and the parents accessing or potentially accessing the service.



The result of this relationship is that the training provision has to be a balance between what the training providers can and will offer, what the parents want, need and are interested in, and what the Sure Start programme believes will help it to meet its targets and be of benefit to the parents in the community.

6.1 Sure Start – Community Training Officer

The Community Training Officer is responsible for the training provision and her role in relation to the provision is to encourage the participation of parents in training and the development of a training programme that meets local parents' needs and reflects their interests.

The Community Training Officer's target is to reduce the number of 0-4 years olds in the Sure Start area living in households where no one is working. However the Community Training Officer has stated that she believes that many of the parents are not ready for, or do not want employment, at this time.

The training offered by the Sure Start programme works in two key ways; developing skills that will appeal to employers such as IT knowledge and developing 'softer' skills such as increasing confidence and self esteem and helping parents to get used to attending something punctually on a regular basis. Some courses are more clearly linked to getting parents into work. These can be seen alongside the Community Training Officer's work with CV

writing and linking parents with employers, as contributing directly to the target of reducing unemployment. Other courses, by building up the softer skills, contribute in a more indirect, but nevertheless extremely important way, by building parents confidence and sense of self-worth as well as widening their horizons ready for the future when they may feel more ready to seek employment. The Community Training Officer believes that the training has the additional benefit of giving parents the opportunity to spend time away from their children which can increase their sense of value as an individual resulting in a happier home life for the whole family.

The Community Training Officer aims to provide training, which balances what the parents want with what is available. The availability of courses can be a limiting factor as whilst Hull College Community Education, one of the principle training providers, offers a wide range of training courses, tutors are not always available at the times the Community Training Officer wishes to run a course. There have been occasions when courses have had to have the times changed at the last minute due to alterations in tutor availability.

Whilst the Community Training Officer is qualified to offer training in areas such as CV writing and interview skills, she does not feel that the parents are ready for this type of course at present. The Community Training Officer is aware that some of the training courses offered by the programme are of more value to employers than others but believes that all of the courses have the potential to be of benefit to parents as outlined above.

The Community Training Officer believes that the most positive aspects of the training provision has been the individual success stories and the fact that, according to the Officer's estimations, 25% of registered Sure Start parents have accessed training (calculated in January). Some of the individual cases where parents have clearly benefited from accessing training through the Sure Start programme are:

- Two parents felt confident enough to make presentations about their experiences of training at the AGM.
- A parent, who was hiding from her family after difficulties in her relationship with them, undertook courses with Sure Start before being signposted onto Step into Learning. From there she progressed into employment as well as studying for a degree level qualification in web design.

In terms of weakness in the training provision and challenges that the Community Training Officer has faced, the four key areas of difficulty are:

- The fact that the Community Training Officer does not have a budget has meant that planning and providing quality training has been more difficult than might have otherwise been the case.
- The lack of suitable venues available in the community for holding training courses.

- The lack of commitment that some parents have shown at times; there have been occasions where several parents who have been registered on a course have not gone on to undertake the training.
- At present the community education that is on offer from the training providers is only available as far as level one. This means that any parents who wish to progress to a more advanced level have to attend mainstream provision elsewhere.

It is expected that the Community Training Officer will have a budget as of April 2004, which will enable a greater degree of flexibility in the training that is provided. For example parents had to attend all of the First Aid sessions in order to pass the course meaning that some parents did not pass. As none of the courses are paid for, the Community Training Officer does not have much lea-way for negotiation. A budget would have allowed the Community Training Officer to buy in an extra session, which could have been used as revision time for students who had attended all of the sessions and a catch-up for anyone who had missed one, enabling more parents to have passed the course.

The Community Training Officer has spent time investigating the options for venues suitable for training provision but has found that there is quite a lot of competition for space due to the limited number of venues in the community. These difficulties are compounded by the fact that any venue would need to have two

rooms, one suitable for use as a classroom and one for use as a crèche. At present Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville training courses are run at Gipsyville Action Centre. The main drawback to this venue is that there is a limit to the number of sessions and the times at which Sure Start can use the room, due to the competition with other organisations wishing to use the space and the fact that as it is not Ofsted registered and therefore the Crèche can only be used by Sure Start for a maximum of 1 hour 59minutes each day.

A number of parents have expressed the desire to progress past level 1 training in various subjects but at present this is the highest level available in the community. The Community Training Officer is currently liaising with Hull College Community Education, one of the key training providers to the Sure Start programme, about the possibility of allowing parents to continue their studies within the community. The Community Training Officer has also asked for a place on the Hull College Forum in order that Sure Start's view can be represented in a similar way to the Sure Start partnership at which the college has representation.

At the present time there is no charge for the Sure Start training courses and anyone can attend. The Community Training Officer hopes to maintain the policy of not charging for courses for registered parents but plans to introduce a small fee for people wishing to attend training who are not registered. In terms of filling the places on the courses, registered Sure Start users have priority if a course is over-subscribed. If in the future Sure Start is able to offer any more advanced training such as GCSEs, course fees

may have to be introduced, as this type of training would incur a greater cost to the programme.

6.2 External Training Providers

A questionnaire was sent out to all of the external providers that have run courses for Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville. The questionnaires provide an insight into the organisations and the type of training that they provide.

5.2.1 Hull College Community Education

Hull College Community Education has been providing training for over eight years and offers courses at a range of venues in the community including church halls, schools and Sure Start programmes. The criteria for the provider to run a course is that there is a venue and a minimum of six learners.

Hull College Community Education provides three-week taster courses and five, eleven and twelve week Open College Network (OCN) courses which are level one courses. The training is aimed at a variety of people including parents, carers and students.

The training provider ensures that the training is appropriate by meeting with the Training Officer before and after each course and holding learning parties to establish the needs and wants of learners.

Students can influence the courses offered by Hull College to a certain extent. Certain criteria have to be met for each course but the remainder of the time is adapted to student's requirements. Students receive evaluation forms to complete at the end of each course and the information collected is used in the assessment of the training.

All of the courses provided by Hull College Community Education are moderated by the Open College Network, who receive the work completed by students on the course, often in the form of a workbook, after it has been marked by the tutor.

All of the tutors provided by Hull College Community Education must have a teacher-training certificate and must pass an interview. New recruits undergo an induction period where they accompany a tutor to classes for around 5-6 weeks.

The Open College Network sets the criteria for each course and the individual tutors are responsible for designing lesson and course plans to ensure that these criteria are met.

In the instance that a tutor is unwell and unable to lead a session the Community Education team will attempt to find a replacement tutor. However, as there are only a few tutors who can teach each course classes do sometimes have to be cancelled.

6.2.2 The Humber Pre-School Learning Alliance

The Humber Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA), which has been a training provider for 30 years, aims to engage parents in learning through introductory childcare and parenting courses.

The PLA works to ensure that their training is appropriate for the needs of Sure Start through quality assurance systems and by liaising with the Community Training Officer. Course materials are adapted to suit the learners' needs and students have the opportunity to give their opinion on the quality of the following:

- Course content
- Tutor
- Materials/presentations
- Venue
- Equipment

The feedback obtained from students is used to influence the delivery of courses across the country as well as to report back to the Department for Education and Skills on the quality of training provided. The PLA supports Sure Start through meetings, correspondence and liaising with the Community Training Officer.

The PLA has a bank of tutors who are available to teach courses. All tutors are encouraged to complete a tutor-training course and have to undergo an interview with the PLA. It is the responsibility of the PLA's Development Workers to recruit tutors. The Development Workers visit a variety of services for children such

as toddler group and collect the details of any group leaders or play workers who are interested in being, and have the potential to be, tutors. These details are then passed on to the PLA regional centre. All members of the staff bank are sent an update form once a year through which they are able to specify the courses that they wish to teach.

In the instance that a tutor is unwell and consequently unable to lead a session, there may be cover but if not the course will have to be postponed for a week.

Funding for the Humber PLA training provision comes from a variety of sources including Sure Start, Global Grants, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, the Learning Skills Council and Basic Skills. This type of funding impacts on the training provided in two ways, as clearly without the funding there can be no training and the funding has to be enough to cover the cost of any particular course that students wish to undertake.

6.2.3 Hull City Council Adult Education Service

Hull City Council Adult Education Service provides training in the community at a number of venues across the city. To date the Service has run a first aid course for Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville and has provided training in family learning, self development and community development at other Sure Start programmes in the area. The Council Adult Education Service has been providing training for a number of years and aims to equip

students with the basic skills to live work and bring up children in the community.

Hull City Council Adult Education Service ensures that the training it provides is appropriate for the requirements of Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville parents through discussion and negotiation with the Community Training Officer. Students are able to influence the content of the course by completing the course surveys, which help the training provider to tailor the courses to individual needs. The student survey forms are currently being redesigned. The information collected is analysed each term.

In terms of ensuring the quality of its training, Hull City Council Adult Education Service has a policy of regular Senior Lecturer observations of tutors. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are also completed routinely. In terms of the support provided to the Sure Start programme the Council Adult Education Service employs an Outreach Worker who is responsible for liaising with partner organisation in the community and advising on the types and methods of training delivery.

Hull City Council Adult Education Service keeps the Sure Start programme informed of new courses that are on offer as well as other relevant information through the publication of annual and termly course publicity in addition to one off publicity material provided for particular tailor-made courses.

The Council Adult Education Service is funded by the Learning Skills Council, this funding allows students who are unemployed or

have a low income to participate in courses that would otherwise be beyond their means.

Tutors are recruited through advertisements in the Hull Daily Mail as well as in internal Council publications. All prospective tutors are interviewed by a panel and their experience and qualifications are checked before they are placed into a pool of tutors who are offered work as it becomes available.

6.2.4 The WAM! (Women and New Media Project)

The WAM! Project is a women only project that aims to make a variety of media accessible and enjoyable to women. The types of media explored include digital video, digital photography and the Internet. The project ran a digital photography taster course for the Sure Start programme for women to try scanning and using the digital camera.

The Community Training Officer asked the WAM! Project to run a taster course at the programme having heard about sessions that the project had done at other Sure Start programmes in the area. The students are very much able to influence the content of the course as all WAM! workshops are learner-led. The women attending the session discuss with the project workers what they would like to do and the workers help them to achieve their aims.

The views of the students on the course are collected via feedback forms, which are completed at the end of each session. A longer form is used at the end of each course. The information on the

forms is used in for three key purposes: to identify any problems, to improve the quality of the project and to satisfy the funders that their money is being used as agreed.

A questionnaire was also sent to L-RAC, another training provider, but this was not returned.

6.3 Parents and Carers

6.3.1 External Evaluation Questionnaires

Parents and carers who had undertaken the following training were requested to participate in the study:

- Let's Play Together Course
- First Aid
- Adult Craft Course

Parents were asked to complete a questionnaire, some of these were completed face-to-face and others individually by parents. In total 18 parents from the three courses completed the questionnaire.

These courses were picked to represent a range of training providers as far as was possible within the timeframe of the evaluation.

Key Findings

- 12 parents had heard about that particular course from the Community Training Officer, 5 had heard about it from other staff and one had received a newsletter which mentioned the training
- Reasons for parents wanting to attend that particular course:
 - Applying to be a childminder (First Aid)
 - It is important when you have children (First Aid)
 - To learn about first aid
 - To know what to do and to be able to act with confidence should anything happen to child or family (First Aid)
 - Have always wanted to do it, particularly since son was born (First Aid)
 - Would like to take it further and become an auxiliary nurse (First Aid)
 - To put on my CV (First Aid)
 - Thought that it would be interesting (Adult Craft)
 - Wanted a break from child! (Adult Craft)
 - Always wanted to do mosaic but didn't know how (Adult Craft)
- Skills being developed by the course:

Skill	Number of students
First Aid	7

Team work	4
Childcare	3
Child development	6
Arts and crafts	7
Creative	4
Artistic	4
Reading	2
Writing	2
Speaking	7
Listening	6
Maths	1
Relaxation	1
General confidence	12

- In terms of improvements in the students skills, students reported either a little of a lot of improvement in the following areas:
 - o Team work
 - o Speaking
 - o Listening
 - o Writing
 - o Reading
 - o General confidence
 - o Artistic
 - o First Aid
 - o Creative

- However, 3 students reported that they had seen no improvement in either reading or writing and 1 reported that he or she had seen no improvement in listening.
- 3 students found the tutor fairly easy to understand and 15 stated that the tutor was very easy to understand.
- 1 student had had no one-to-one help from the tutor, 11 students stated that they had had some help and 6 stated that they had had lots of help.
- 3 students stated that they had not spent any time helping their classmates (it may, of course, have been the case that none of their classmates needed any help), 12 students had spent some time helping their classmates and 2 students had spent lots of time.
- 3 students stated that their classmates had not spent any time helping them, 14 said that their classmates had spent some time helping them and 1 student stated that their classmates had spent lots of time helping them.
- 7 students found the course material fairly useful and 10 students found them very useful.
- Regarding the courses that involved group activities and practical exercises, First Aid and Let's Play Together, 2

students find the activities and exercises ok and 12 stated that they like them.

- Students were requested to state how difficult they had found the course that they were on, 17 had found it about right and one had found it too easy.
- The students were asked how interesting they had found the course, 3 said fairly interesting and 15 said interesting.
- All 7 students who completed questionnaires on the First Aid course stated that they thought that the course would be very useful. On the Let's Play Together course 5 of the students that completed the questionnaire believed that the course would be useful and 2 thought that it would be very useful. With regards to the Adult Craft course, 1 student thought that it would be of limited use as he or she would not have time at home for crafts and that the course was something just for fun, 2 students believed that the course would be useful and 1 believed that it would be very useful to them.
- When asked about plans for the future, students gave the following comments:
 - o *Move onto another training course – interested in First Aid or Child Psychology, possibly move onto college.*
 - o *Christmas Crafts course, but no other plans*
 - o *Signed up for aromatherapy, have been doing Christmas Crafts*

- o *Move onto another training course – interested in Christmas Crafts, Nail Art and Colour Tec*
 - o *Move onto other qualifications or another training course – 3 parents*
 - o *No plans yet – 6 parents*
 - o *Further Sure Start courses*
 - o *Become a childminder*
 - o *Move onto other qualifications or another training course and try to find a job*
 - o *Looking into it*
 - o *Moving onto another training course*
- Parents on the Let's Play Together course were asked if the course was making a difference to their lives as well as the lives of their children. All of the students answered yes in both cases. Parents answers included:
 - o *Baby is learning to be without me for a couple of hours*
 - o *New ideas to use with child*
 - o *New friends*
 - o *The chance to be more than just a mum*
 - o *Help develop more skills for my special needs child.*
 - o *I like making things for my child*
 - o *Child has the opportunity to interact with other people*
 - o *I feel more independent*

- o *My child is learning to share and we are both getting out and about and not stuck in the house*
- o *I take the information and apply it in the week*
- o *Child is starting to speak more and learning to join in*

Four of the seven parents that completed a questionnaire on the Let's Play Together course felt that the course had influenced their plans.

- Improvements that could be made to the course:
 - o More time and less paperwork (Let's Play Together)
 - o More cutting and sticking! (Let's Play Together)
 - o Hand out more information sheets so we can read and look at them later (Let's Play Together)
 - o More crafts - making things for child (Let's Play Together)
 - o More time (Adult Craft)

6.3.2 Internal Evaluation Questionnaires

The Community Training Officer produces questionnaires to be completed by parents at the end, and sometimes during, each of the training courses. We have been able to analyse the results of the questionnaires from the following:

- Alternative Therapies
- Management Training
- Computer Course

The Management Training course, for parents who are members of the programme's management board, was attended by three parents all of who completed questionnaires. All these parents stated that:

- The quality of slides/presentation and the quality of the handouts was very good
- That they had learnt something new
- That they had found the training beneficial.
- That the standard of teaching was very good
- That they had enjoyed the session and would consider another course with Sure Start

The L-RAC Computer Course was a 10-week course for which seven parents completed an interim questionnaire. The findings from the questionnaire are:

- All seven parents were enjoying the sessions, could cope with the pace of work and had learnt something new.

- Three parents stated that their child was enjoying the crèche and two stated that they were not.
- All seven parents rated the resources and work provided and the trainer as very good.
- Five parents rated the training room as very good and two as good.
- Six parents rated the centre overall as very good and one as good.
- Three parents rated the crèche as very good and two as good.
- Six parents rated their dealings with Sure Start staff as very good and five parents rated the friendliness of the crèche workers as very good.
- When asked about the aim that they had had when enrolling onto the course parents listed the following:
 - o A basic knowledge of computers/to develop computer skills - four parents
 - o To develop new skills/to learn something new - two parents
- Six of the parents believed that they were going to achieve their aim and one was not sure.

- When asked if there was anything that Sure Start could do to help them achieve their aim, four parents answered no, one stated they were not sure and one answered yes stating that Sure Start could help by organising a follow-on course to help the student progress.

Three of the six parents that attended the Alternative Therapies taster sessions completed questionnaires. The findings from these were:

- All three parents enjoyed the taster session and would like to sign up for a full course if one became available.
- All three had learnt something new and would like to try other taster sessions.
- Other taster courses that the parents would like to try include:
 - o Yoga
 - o Tai Chi
 - o Gardening
 - o Mechanics
 - o Hairdressing
 - o Anything!
- Two parents had heard about the training through advertising by Sure Start and one from the programme newsletter.

- All three parents found the booking of the session, the crèche and the crèche workers and the trainer very good.
- 2 of the parents had found the venue very good and one had found it good.
- In terms of changes that could be made to the course one parents stated that he or she would change nothing and had really enjoyed the session and one commented that the training had been difficult because of the noise from the crèche.

6.3.3 Focus Group

As part of the evaluation a small focus group was conducted with parents in order to discuss the training provision and the impact that it had had on the parent's and their children's lives. The parents that attended the focus group had undertaken the following courses between them:

- First Aid
- Sociology
- Let's Play Together
- Aromatherapy
- Computer Course
- Holiday Spanish
- Women and New Media

The parents' reasons for undertaking the courses included:

- As a mother of 5, cannot work due to cost of childcare
- Needed time for self to be something other than just a mum.
- Wanted an output
- To combat reactive depression, Sure Start keeps parent busy and provides opportunity to meet other parents
- Both mother and child needed to get out more and mix with other people
- Wanted the opportunity to learn something new
- Opportunity for child to mix with other children in crèche
- Interaction with other parents
- Something to do that is a break from child

In terms of the length of the courses one parent stated that she had found the Let's Play Together course a little drawn out but thought that that might simply be a personal issue as she preferred less hands-on courses. The parents stated that it would have been good if the Spanish and Sociology courses could have been longer but that this would have meant going to college.

The parents had heard about the training courses in various ways including:

- Filled in form about training and was contacted by Nicky
- Was put in touch with Nicky through the Health Visitors
- Enquired at the programme about training and was put in touch with Nicky

The parents also commented that:

- It can be difficult to find out about the training on offer if you don't already know about Sure Start or use the community centre
- Promotion could be carried out in shopping centres, supermarkets, chemists, at antenatal classes, through Community Midwives, in the hospital bounty packs and in the birth registration packs.

In terms of attendance it was stated that both child and parent illness as well as other situations can lead to classes being missed. This has only been a problem with the First Aid course as full attendance is necessary in order to pass the course. It was suggested that a more family orientated approach should be adopted that allows for opportunities to catch up if sessions are missed.

We asked parents to think about the skills that the training courses have helped them to develop. The following were mentioned:

- Reading
- Writing - sociology
- Speaking – one parent has been encouraged to speak out more, group discussions gave students the opportunity to practise skills in this area
- Listening – Sociology, Spanish, First Aid

- Computer
- First Aid
- Team working – First Aid, Sociology
- Child development
- General confidence – having undertaken various courses through the Sure Start programme had given one parent the confidence to speak at the AGM

On the whole the parents had been happy with the tutors that had taught the courses and one parent had been particularly pleased with the Computer Course tutor who encouraged those working at a more advanced level to help those parents who were beginners, something which was a real confidence boost. However, the parents had found one tutor patronising and not interested in the less artistic parents.

In terms of the materials and resources used on the courses the parents had found the literature on the Computer Course too technical and stated that the videos used in the Let's Play Together sessions were not really appropriate for the age of Sure Start children.

We asked the parent's whether the training had made any difference to their lives and if so in what way. The parents stated that the training had had the following impacts:

- Increasing your confidence

- Making your children proud of you which is good for your own self-esteem
- Thinking about GCSEs
- First Aid helps you to feel happier and more secure that you know what to do in certain situations
- Being out and learning makes you feel good
- Sense of achievement when you complete a course

In terms of the impact on their children's lives, parents mentioned the following:

- Child learns to mix better with other children
- Child learns to share better
- Improved speech
- Relieves stress in parent/child relationship
- Child is pleased to see you after the course

We moved onto discuss whether or not the training had had any impact on the parent's future plans. Parent's commented that the Community Training Officer was available to support parents in looking for work and also that the training courses could provide a way of maintaining old interests that may get forgotten once you have children. Parents also listed the following as ways in which the training had influenced their plans for the future:

- Have developed new interests – computers, childcare
- Training has given ideas for what I could do
- Thinking about future employment

- Planning to do a GCSE in sociology

The parents also planned to continue with taking courses through Sure Start and were interested in training in the following areas:

- GCSEs – Maths, English, Science, Humanities
- Cooking
- Engineering
- Computers – technical
- Languages – sign language
- Self defence

6.3.4 Written Feedback

Three parents have written a brief piece on their experience of Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville training courses. The feedback is very positive and the three parents mention the following benefits that they have gained from attending training at the programme:

- Childcare provided for son who has speech and language difficulties
- The opportunity to be more than simply a mum, someone children can look up to
- Increased confidence and feeling good about one's self
- Opportunity to socialise with other local parents in a similar situation
- The chance to try something new

- Enjoyable courses
- The knowledge that child is well looked after and safe in the crèche

Originally I was nervous, as I didn't have very much confidence at school, and after having three children, I wanted to try something new,

I have never had such a good social life, meeting other parents in similar situations living local to myself.

So now I'm not just a mum 24/7, instead my children look up to me because I'm a mum who's going to college to get qualified. It makes me feel good about myself and has given me so much confidence, that I can do anything I put my mind to.

6.3.5 The Crèche

One of the key factors behind the success of the Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville training provision is the crèche that is provided free to parents at every session. For this reason we also asked that parents, through questionnaires and a focus group, to give their opinions about the crèche. The crèche is run by the Pre-School Learning Alliance who provides two crèche workers for each session. As the crèche is not Ofstead registered the maximum amount of time that a session can run for is two hours.

Parents were asked to state what they like about the crèche; the most common answer was that their child (or children) enjoys it. Other things that the parents like include:

- It's free
- It's professionally organised
- There are craft activities and the children make things
- There is lots of play equipment
- The staff are friendly
- It builds up the child's confidence
- It is always run by the same staff
- The children are well looked after
- It is a good practice for pre-school for children
- My child is close to me/it is in the same building
- There is a good range of toys and activities
- It is informal
- Child gets on well with the other children and the adults
- Child has learnt a lot and developed new skills
- There are plenty of staff
- Child is safe

A number of parents stated that they had noticed a difference in their child since they had started attending the crèche although one parent explained that her child was changing all the time and she did not know if any of this was related to using the crèche. Three parents stated that they had not noticed any changes. Some of the changes that parents have noticed are:

- Child more confident and less clingy
- Improved speech
- Child shares more

- More sociable
- It tires child out and so he/she goes to bed
- Child plays more at home
- Good relationship with crèche workers
- Child more confident and willing to take part

When we asked parents about what they gained from having a crèche provided for them during the training at Sure Start the most common answer was time out and a break from their child followed by peace of mind that their child is well looked after. Several parents highlighted the fact that it is only due to the provision of a crèche that they are able to undertake training courses. Other gains for the parent cited were the opportunity to mix with other parents, time to be yourself and not just a mum and the chance for your child to be away from the parent in a friendly environment.

Parents were asked what they thought that their child had gained from attending the crèche. Ten parents stated that their child had gained the opportunity to interact with other children their own age, to make friends and to become more confident with other children. Other things that parents believed their children had gained included:

- Social skills
- Learning to share
- Independence
- Developing new skills
- Different social scene

- Being away from parent
- New experiences
- Has learnt to use a cup
- Child is less moody

The majority of the parents from whom we collected feedback stated that there was nothing that they would like to change about the crèche. However some changes/improvements were suggested and one parents expressed concern about bite marks on her child's hand. Some of the improvements suggested and comment made included:

- First Aid box should be kept in a visible place
- Staff do not always seem to have time to listen to you when explaining child's needs
- Larger indoor toys – soft blocks etc.
- More toys for the younger children
- To be informed if child needs nappy changing
- Crèche available for longer periods of time (thus allowing for longer courses and more of a break)

The Training Officer had had concerns about the quality of the crèche run by the Pre-School Learning Alliance and in April 2004 the decision was made to employ crèche workers directly. This should provide continuity, increased opportunities to plan courses and a more professional service. The Training Officer had felt that there were issues with the quality of the crèche being provided by

the PLA staff that could not be addressed, as they were not employed through Sure Start.

6.4 Strengths and Challenges of the Training Provision – A Summary of Stakeholder Perceptions

Below is a summary of the key strengths and challenges of the training provision that emerged from consultation with the various stakeholders.

Strengths

- Parents who have attended training courses at Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville have seen improvements in their skills in a range of areas including speaking, listening, IT and general confidence
- All of the parents that we surveyed had found the tutor either fairly or very easy to understand
- The majority of the parents surveyed stated that they thought that they would find the course either useful or very useful
- 47% of the places filled on the courses were taken by students who attended 100% of the sessions on their particular course and 41% of the places were taken by students who attended between 50 and 99% of the sessions
- There were many success stories given by individual parents. Many parents have gained greatly in confidence and

there are parents who have gone on from Sure Start training to further education or employment

- The training provision gives parents the opportunity to have a break from their child as well as the chance to be something other than simply a parent
- The parents who use the crèche believe that accessing the service provides their child with many benefits such as the chance to interact with other children, improved speech, and increased confidence in being away from their parents
- The time apart from their children may relieve some of the stress in family relationships for parents accessing the training

Challenges

- At present the training provision offered by Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville is only able to offer courses up to level one and parents are unable to attend more advanced training through the programme
- There have been some problems with the reliability of tutors and courses with one particular training provider. This has led to some courses being cancelled or altered at relatively short notice

- There is at times a lack of commitment from some parents leading to poor attendance
- There is a lack of alternative venues available suitable for running training courses in meaning that the times and the number of courses that Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville can run is limited
- Due to the fact that the Community Training Officer does not have a budget there is a lack of flexibility in some of the courses, which means that they do not always meet the needs of parents
- Some of the parents found that the course materials used on the Computer Course were too technical and that the videos used on the Let's Play Together course were not really relevant for the age of Sure Start children

7. Good Quality Training Provision

The issue of what makes good quality training is obviously very much dependent on the group at which the training is aimed at and will be used by. Thus what may constitute good quality training for one group would be entirely inappropriate for another. The training provided by Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville is aimed at the parents of under-4s living in the community, which is a disadvantaged area.

The Learning Skills Council document *Successful Participation For All: Widening Adult Participation Strategy*, which outlines the LSC's approach to widening adult participation in education and training contains some useful discussion on engaging learners in community based training and education opportunities.

The LSC Strategy suggests that whilst everybody continues to learn throughout their lives, some people would not necessarily describe themselves as learners and would not consider themselves to have skills in this area. Additionally, for some people learning may be seen as a chore as opposed to a liberating concept. These attributes are likely to be present in many of the parents living in the Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville area and are addressed through the training provision. By undertaking one or more of the training courses offered by the Sure Start programme parents may begin to see themselves as learners and to develop confidence in their skills in this area. By offering a range of courses that includes some that might appeal to parents as more fun options the training provision will be able to help students

to see learning and training as something enjoyable rather than as being a chore.

The LSC Strategy highlights the importance of developing the provision for learning and training around the learners as opposed to requiring the learners to fit pre-existing models of provision. This is particularly relevant to Sure Start training as clearly the structure of the training, at parent-friendly times with a crèche available, is pivotal to the success of the provision. It is clear from our discussions with both parents accessing the training and the Community Training Officer that some of the pre-existing training available in the city is unsuitable for parents needs. The Strategy also recommends that the 'entry points to learning are available in non-educational settings', something that the Sure Start programme is very clearly able to offer.

The move away from traditional educational settings to more community-based experiences is an important one as for many of the parents, as for many adults in general, their experience of statutory education has not been very positive. The LSC Strategy highlights three key issues, which may have characterised statutory education for them:

- Much teaching and little learning
- Content which appeared neither to interest them nor relate to their lives
- The experience of failure and associated humiliation

In order to engage and sustain parents interest and participation in the training provision it is essential that as much as possible is done to counteract this perception and to create an atmosphere where training and learning is seen as enjoyable and rewarding.

Many of the courses offered by Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville are of quite a practical nature, arts and crafts, first aid, IT, etc, this method of teaching will hopefully ensure that the courses do not feel to the students as 'much teaching and little learning', involving the students in the learning process rather than simply teaching 'at' them.

By involving parents in the process of choosing the courses that the programme runs the Community Training Officer has ensured that the courses will be interesting and relevant to the parents' lives. By offering a range of courses, many of which have been directly requested by parents, the programme can engage parents in the training encouraging them to broaden their horizons and develop new interests as their confidence grows.

The majority of the courses on offer do not involve any kind of examination and thus minimise the risk of students feeling that they have failed. This is by no means to suggest that community training should always avoid examination but simply that emphasis should be placed on the achievement of having taken part in or completed a course as opposed to 'passing' and 'failing'. Students currently receive a certificate at the end of each course, this is important as it increases students' sense of achievement and therefore, in time, their self-esteem. In terms of creating an

environment where students do not experience a sense of failure or humiliation the tutor leading a particular course plays a crucial role. In the feedback collected from parents the tutor on one particular course was singled out as having been patronising and making the parent's feel 'small'.

At the present time the training provision has been successful in consulting local parents on the types of training that they would be interested in. The Community Training Officer has emphasised that whilst some training, such as CV writing and interview techniques, might seem more directly relevant to reducing unemployment, the majority of the parents accessing the training are not at this stage ready for or interested in this type of course. Both these factors are important to the success of the training provision as, as is outlined in the LSC Strategy, any type of training or education that is premised on the deficit model, where parents' are seen as 'needing' basic skills or 'needing' interview technique classes is likely to demotivate parents. This model of training will make potential students feel that they are being criticised as failures and that the process is a passive rather than active one.

The importance of running 'softer', perhaps more immediately appealing courses alongside those more directly connected to employability is highlighted by the fact the LSC Strategy describes learning as a 'gradual process, which allows time for confidence to build'. By providing short courses that do not demand that parents are particularly academic or have skills in a particular area, the training provision enables parents to gradually build up their

knowledge, their soft skills, and most important their confidence as they move through the training on offer and potentially onto further qualifications or employment in the future.

Whilst the Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville training seems to have achieved the right balance of courses to break parents' into education and training gently, there is in some areas a lack of more advanced training for parents to move onto. This issue has been raised by both the parents and the Community Training Officer and is something that is being looked into.

There would undoubtedly be benefits to the Sure Start programme being able to offer more advanced training to parents in a community setting. Whilst it is possible for some parents to attend mainstream educational institutions for the majority the initial barriers, unsuitable hours, lack of childcare, financial costs, still apply. The Sure Start programme is able to provide a degree of financial assistance and support but community based learning is still by far the more suitable option for most parents. The LSC Strategy highlights the important role that qualifications play in community learning and training and presumes that although qualifications should by no means be viewed as the sole outcome of learning they are 'centrally important to people who previously have not had their learning publicly recognised'. The LSC Strategy also states that the 'facility to acquire qualifications in small units is supportive to adults seeking to combine learning with other life activities', clearly parents' with young children are a group very much trying to combine their training and learning with other life activities.

8. Conclusion

Probably the key success of the Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville training provision is the fact that it has been developed around the needs of the learners. By consulting with local parents to ascertain the type of training that they would be interested in and by providing a crèche, the Sure Start programme has ensured that the training meets the needs of the parents. This is clearly preferable to expecting the potential learners to fit into pre-existing models of delivery, as would be the case if parents were to attend training run through one of the existing providers currently operating in the city.

As part of offering training that is built around the needs of the learners, there are other important aspects of the service offered by the Sure Start programme in addition to the consultation work and the crèche. Offering training courses in the community in a non-educational setting is pivotal to the successful engagement of parents in the provision. Equally vital is that the training avoids creating a setting where the experiences of many of the learners of statutory education are repeated. By running courses that provide practical and involved learning, that cover relevant and interesting topics and that on the whole are led by tutors who minimise opportunities for feelings of failure and humiliation amongst students, the training ensures that these experiences are not repeated.

By providing a range of courses, students are able to build up their confidence gradually, beginning with a course such as Christmas Crafts which they might see as being 'just for fun' and in time moving onto courses that require more of a commitment and which might in turn lead on to further education or employment. Having a range of courses also means that there are plenty of options for those who may not see themselves as learners in the traditional sense and may otherwise feel discouraged from undertaking training.

The principle challenge in terms of the training provision is the lack of progression currently available to parents who have completed a level one course with Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville. At present the training providers who have been working in partnership with the Sure Start programme will only offer training at either a taster or a level one stage in the community. This means for example, parents who have completed the Introduction to Sociology course and have found the subject interesting are unable to continue their studies in this area within the programme. As a result of this the balance in the relationship between the parents, Sure Start and the training providers may gradually shift away from the parents. Whilst the training will continue to meet the needs of new parents coming to the training, parents who have already completed a number of courses may find their needs outgrow what is available at Sure Start but that they are not yet ready to move into employment or mainstream education and training.

Whilst on the whole the parents that we gathered feedback from had all been happy with the tutors leading the training courses, there was some discussion at the focus group around a tutor who the parents had found to be somewhat patronising and, they felt, only interested in those students with artistic ability. As discussed in the section on learner's experiences of statutory education, it is vital that the tutor cultivate an atmosphere that is positive and ensures that parent do not experience feelings of failure and humiliation.

Some issues have arisen regarding the reliability and flexibility of the provision. The key factor in terms of reliability has been that Hull College does not ensure the availability of a tutor resulting in sessions being cancelled, and courses being either cancelled or altered after they have been arranged and advertised. The lack of flexibility in the training on offer from the external training providers has been experienced parents on the First Aid Course. Not all of the parents on the course passed, as they had not attended all of the sessions. A parent who attended the focus group had missed a session through illness and had therefore not completed the required number of hours to pass the course. A more flexible approach that included an additional session to compensate for missed weeks would have allowed more parents to have obtained the qualification.

The Community Training Officer raised the issue of the lack of commitment shown by some of the parents undertaking training with the Sure Start programme, which has meant that whilst the Community Training Officer may have several parents booked

onto a course, they may not all turn up. Some parents have only attended one session on a particular course and have not attended any subsequent courses. The reasons for this are unclear but it is important that the relationship between parent's commitment and the degree to which the training meets their needs is recognised.

Over all the training provision has supported many parents to acquire both practical and personal skills. The local programme can be confident in the fact that it is working towards achieving the overriding objective of strengthening families and communities. The local programme should remain particularly encouraged having, at 01/01/04, supported four local parents into employment.

9. Recommendations

- **To run more advanced training courses.** The Community Training Officer is at present working to attempt to set up more advanced training in the community through Hull College Community Education. This work needs to be developed and expanded on to ensure a means of progression for parents attending the training currently on offer through the programme. The introduction of a budget for training held by the Community Training Officer would potentially allow more advanced courses to be bought in, which could run in addition to the free training that the Sure Start programme is currently able to run through the community training providers. Alternatively, it may be possible to develop partnerships with alternative training providers who may be able to offer training above level 1. Courses that allow students to gain qualifications in small units would be particularly appropriate for parents, as it would enable them to combine learning with their other responsibilities. The following are training providers in the area who may potentially be able to run appropriate training courses at Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville. The Community Training Officer is aware of alternative training provision available in the area but is unable to utilize their services without a budget with which to buy in training:

- **Hull CVS** – Hull Community Voluntary Services, currently runs Basic Skills courses at another Sure Start programme in the area.
 - **Art Link Exchange** – runs Cartwheels training courses. Cartwheels is an accredited art worker community training course that allows students to achieve Open College Network level 2 or 3.
 - **Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Hull** - promotes and supports lifelong learning, delivering off campus courses at locations in the region.
 - **Dove House Hospice** – provides short courses some of which are run in the community.
 - **WEA Yorkshire North District** – The Workers' Educational Association offers a wide range of courses in community settings
- **To promote the training provision throughout the community and access a greater number of parents.** The point that it may be difficult for parents not accessing Sure Start to find out about the training was raised at the focus group. Whilst the attendance figures for the courses are good, the more parents within the community that access training, the bigger the impact on the reduction in unemployment target is likely to be. The parents at the focus group suggested promotion through parent-friendly venues such as shopping centres, supermarkets, chemists and antenatal classes as well as through Community Midwives, in the hospital bounty packs and in the birth registration packs. It is important that promotional material is targeted at

parents of 0-4 year olds living in the Sure Start area in order to ensure large numbers of non Sure Start eligible learners are not attracted. Equally as important as the method used for reaching parents is the type of promotion used. The Learning Skills Council Strategy suggests that individual learners' stories can be used to encourage others to join in. Parents who have attended training courses have written short pieces about their experiences and these could be incorporated into publicity for the training courses. Informal open evenings could be held which offer parents the opportunity to find out more about the training and learning opportunities on offer before committing themselves, these events could again involve input from 'success story' parents who can chat to potential learners about their experiences and what they have gained from the provision.

- **Ensure that all of the tutors that are supplied by the training providers are of a high quality and lead the course in a style appropriate to the learners.** It should be ensured that all of the tutors that run courses at Sure Start Newington with Gipsyville have an understanding of Sure Start and its aims and objectives. The tutors should also be fully aware of the pivotal role that they play in engaging the learners. Many parents will be facing barriers in terms of their previous experiences of statutory education and the environment created by the tutors at the training sessions will be instrumental in determining the success or failure of the student's learning experience. These factors should be reflected in the Service Level Agreements between Sure

Start Newington with Gipsyville and the individual training providers.

- **Set a budget for training provision to be used to develop the service further.** We have been led to understand that as of April 2004 there will be a training budget to be used by the Community Training Officer in the provision of training opportunities. The budget should be used to increase the flexibility of courses in instances where a certain number of hours have to be completed by students in order to pass the course, extra sessions could be bought in to make this process easier for parents. Additionally, a small amount of spending power may provide the Community Training Officer with some flexibility in negotiating with training providers over offering more advanced training in the community. A set budget would allow the Community Training Officer to plan more efficiently and should incorporate money to be spent on promoting the training to parents, particularly those currently not accessing Sure Start services, as discussed in an earlier recommendation.