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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

One of the Sure Start SDA targets states that all programmes must demonstrate:

An increase in the proportion of families with young children reporting personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of family support services

Accordingly during September 2003 the local evaluator sought to identify the level of satisfaction with family support services (not just those provided by Sure Start) amongst parents and carers of children aged 4 and under (registered and unregistered) living in the Sure Start Shiremoor and Killingworth programme area.

1.2 Methods

Following discussion with the evaluation steering group about a range of possible approaches, a self-completion questionnaire (see appendix) based on user satisfaction surveys used by both recent MORI and Sure Start Wallsend was selected. This was then adapted following consultation with the programme team and piloting with a group of six parents.

Sure Start and PCT data was used to set both an overall target for participation in the survey of 20% families with children aged 0-4 in the programme area (equivalent to 100 families) and a quota to ensure representation of the programme’s three main geographic sub-areas (Shiremoor; Killingworth; and Moorside, Backworth and West Allotment) and of families who are and are not registered with Sure Start. As the distribution of families was found to be broadly equal a quota of 34 families per sub-area was set. Meanwhile as Sure Start has registered half of all families in the area, it was agreed that 50% of respondents should be registered and 50% not.

Nineteen venues and activities used by local families were identified by the Sure Start team as potential sites for the survey; these included: parent and toddler groups; nurseries; baby clinics; and activities such as baby massage, breast feeding groups, cookery courses and fitness courses. Access to sites/activities not supported by a Sure Start worker was negotiated by the evaluator and questionnaires (together with a covering letter, instructions for the facilitator and pre-paid envelopes) sent to them prior to the survey period. Meanwhile, Sure Start workers were given questionnaires and supporting materials to distribute to their groups. In addition, five parent volunteers, already trained in research methods, and the evaluator were available to support any facilitators/workers who thought the parents attending their group/activity might need assistance.
The survey took place between the 15 and 26 September 2003. 102 valid responses were received (this included 3 questionnaires completed by telephone to ensure one element of the quota was achieved) and analysed using Excel.
2. Findings

The findings from the survey focus on: participant characteristics; their overall satisfaction with family support services for children aged four and under in the programme area; satisfaction with particular services; perceived changes in service provision during the previous twelve months; usage and views on health services, children’s services, play and learning services and support for parents; involvement with Sure Start and ideas for service provision. In most instances the overall findings for each issue are presented first, followed by an indication of any differences between families who are registered with Sure Start and those who are not, and any geographical Variation.

2.1 Participant Characteristics

Respondents were predominantly female (98%) and as Figure 1 illustrates aged 20-39.

**Figure 1: Age Group**

![Pie chart showing age distribution](chart1.png)

As Figure 2 reveals most respondents either lived with 1 (41.1%) or 2 children (38.2%) aged 16 or under, the highest number of children in any household being 4. Note those who said ‘none’ were either grandparents or did not answer the question.

**Figure 2: Number of children**

![Pie chart showing number of children](chart2.png)
Unsurprisingly 68.6% of respondents had children aged 1-4 years (see Figure 3), of these 77% had one child in this age group, 22% had two and 1% had three. 34.3% of respondents said the child(ren) in their household were aged 0-11 months, in only one instance did the respondent live with two children in this age group. Of the 30.4% living with children aged 5-11 years most lived with one child in this age group but three respondents lived with two.

**Figure 3: Families with children in particular age groups**

As Figure 4 shows 70.7% of respondents live with their partner and 8.1% with adult relatives, but 18.2% live alone – all of this group are aged under 39 and most are in their 20's.

**Figure 4: Who respondents and their children live with.**

45.1% of the parents/carers responding to the survey were in either full time or part-time paid work, the same proportion defined themselves as being a full time parent or carer, while in each instance 3.9% said they were retired or unemployed (see Figure 5). ‘Other’ included being on maternity leave or in full time education. Further analysis of the data revealed that 75.5% of respondents lived in a household where at least one adult was in employment.
As Figure 6 shows the majority of parents/carers who completed the survey were white British/Irish.
2.2 Overall satisfaction

As Figure 7 illustrates 75.5% of respondents said they were either very or fairly satisfied with services for children under 4 and their families in the programme area, 14.7% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied, but 9.8% were dissatisfied to some degree.

Figure 7: Overall satisfaction with services for children under 4 and their families

![Pie chart showing overall satisfaction with services for children under 4 and their families.]

Differences were also apparent between those registered with Sure Start and those who are not, and also in relation to where parents/carers live:

- More of those registered with Sure Start said they were very/fairly satisfied (80.4%) compared to those who are not registered (70.6%).

- While more people from Killingworth were very/fairly satisfied (76.5%), compared to people from Shiremoor (64.7%) or Moorside/Backworth/West Allotment (56.9%).

Satisfaction with services

Looking across a range of family support services, the service that received the highest satisfaction rating was health (e.g. health visitors, midwives and nursery nurses) at 85.1%(see Figure 8). Next was childcare (e.g. nurseries, toddler groups and other childcare) with 77% satisfaction, while 54.5% were satisfied with the level of support available for parents generally. However, just over a third of parents/carers (36.8% in both instances) said they were satisfied with the level of support for parents in the home and help accessing training and employment, although this probably reflects the number of people actually using these services (see Figure 14). Meanwhile, displeasure with local parks and play areas was clear with over three quarters (77.2%) of parents/carers indicating their dissatisfaction with local provision.
Overall more of those parents/carers who were registered with Sure Start were satisfied with all of the listed services apart from local play facilities, where they were more likely to be dissatisfied.

Compared to the other areas parents/carers from Shiremoor were more likely to say they were satisfied with health services; while those from Killingworth were most likely to express satisfaction with the level of support for parents both generally and in the home, and with help to access training and employment. Satisfaction with childcare being highest among parents/carers from Moorside, Backworth and West Allotment.

When considering other aspects of service delivery, although 80.6% of parents/carers were satisfied with the friendliness of staff, only half of all parents/carers were satisfied with the accessibility and availability of services. Indeed as Figure 9 shows 19.4% were dissatisfied with accessibility. However, it was the cost of childcare that revealed the highest level of dissatisfaction at 26.4%.
Those registered with Sure Start were most likely to be satisfied with the friendliness of services, while more of those who were not registered were satisfied with the cost of childcare.

Parents/carers from Killingworth were more likely to be satisfied with all aspects of local family support services than those from the other areas.

2.3 Change in services over the previous 12 months

44.1% of parents/carers thought that services in the programme area had improved over the last 12 months and 40.2% that they had stayed the same, with only 2% believing they had become worse (see Figure 10).

More people registered with Sure Start thought services had improved (54.9%) compared to those who were not registered (33.3%). While those who were not registered were more likely to think services had stayed the same (47.1% compared to 33.3% of those who were registered).
The perception that services had improved was highest among parents/carers from Shiremoor (50% compared to 41% in both of the other areas).

Looking at particular types of service, parents/carers were most likely to think that services had stayed the same; only a small minority thought they had become worse (see Figure 11). Of those who felt able to comment the only provision the majority agreed had improved over the last twelve months was the amount of information available for parents (54.2%), although almost half thought childcare facilities (48%) and the level of support available to parents (46.4%) was better. However, only 28.2% thought the number of things for children to do had improved.

Figure 11 Perceptions of change in particular services for children under 4, families and pregnant women

Parents/carers registered with Sure Start were more likely than their counterparts to think that the level of support available to parents, health services for children and parents and the number of things for children to do had improved during the past 12 months. There were no marked differences between the two groups with regard to perceived improvements in childcare facilities, the amount of information available to parents or the level of help available to access training and employment.

Compared to the other areas more parents/carers living in Shiremoor thought childcare facilities had improved over the last 12 months, while more of those from Killingworth believed that the amount of information and support available for parents, and health services for parents were better. There were no marked differences between the areas with regards to the number of things for children to do, health services for children, but parents/carers from Moorside, Backworth and West Allotment were least
likely to think that the level of help available to access training and employment had improved.

2.4 Use of health services

As Figure 12 illustrates the majority of parents/carers had visited their GP (89.2%), had advice or a visit from a health visitor/midwife (69.6%), or had been to a baby clinic (66.6%) during the previous twelve months. Only just over a third had received dental advice (37.3%), while a similar proportion had had contact with a Sure Start worker (37.2%). The ‘other’ health services used by parents included a first aid course, a confidence building course and referral to a clinical psychologist.

Figure 12 Health Services used from mid September 2002-September 2003

- In every instance when compared to parents/carers who are not registered with Sure Start, more of those who are registered had used the health services listed above.

- Compared to the other areas a higher proportion of parents/carers from Moorside, Backworth and West Allotment had used antenatal classes, baby clinics, a health visitor/midwife (although use of this service was also high in Shiremoor) and advice/support on weaning. While more parents/carers from Killingworth had accessed advice/support on breast feeding and more of those from Shiremoor recalled receiving advice on diet, nutrition and dental health. There was little marked difference between the areas in terms of visits to see GP, access to speech and language therapy, smoking cessation, visits from a Sure Start worker or advice on preventing accidents in the home.

When asked how the health services they had used during the previous twelve months had helped them, 52 parents/carers responded, the most frequent
replies being it: helped us to live more healthily (7), gave me advice (6), increased my knowledge/ information available to me (4), kept us up to date with immunisations (4), improved my health (3), improved my child’s language skills (3), helped my health during pregnancy (2), helped keep my child safe around the house (2), helped my child live more healthily (2) and helped me breast-feed and wean (2). Examples of these and other responses were:

Helped me live more healthily/improved my health

‘Keep track of my baby’s development. Maintain care for my health during pregnancy.’

‘Stopped smoking feel happy with advice.’

‘Helped eat a balanced diet.’

‘Improved my mental health!- home with a small baby – useful to have lots of support and contact with other mothers.’

‘This has improved my mental health. Advice from Health Visitor has been very supportive and helping with what is best for children.’

Increased my knowledge/ provided advice

‘Becoming more aware and informed or issues such as birth, breastfeeding, etc.’

‘Helped with advice on new baby and toddler from GP and Health Visitor’.

‘I needed advice on weaning which was fairly useful. Also general advice whilst pregnant and after my child was born was again useful.’

‘Helped with potty training for my 3 year old (6 months ago) which was excellent. The nursery nurse made me feel relaxed and gave me several tips – all of which were successful. Also breast feeding and weaning my new baby.’

Increased my confidence/provided reassurance

‘Made me more confident with my son.’

‘Gave me confidence in what I am already doing.’

‘Playgroup, baby clinics and GP have eased my mind on any questions I have had about my child.’

‘Any problems I haven’t been sure of I feel confident that there is always someone to help.’

‘It gives peace of mind knowing that these services are in place when needed.’
‘Better understanding of child’s illnesses, how to cope, prevent and treat it.’

‘Generally made me as a mum more happy and settled as a parent, that I’m doing OK.’

‘Reassurance on behaviour and health issues.’

**Improved child’s health/behaviour**

‘Improvement in child’s eating behaviour and excellent advice given on nutrition.’

‘Preparing for another child. Helping older child improve his language.’

‘Helped provide childcare, health advice and starting to improve child’s language.’

‘Improved my son’s speech and helped with me being pregnant.’

‘It has helped me with my child’s behaviour as was bad tempered. Its helped her to calm down and be with crèche workers and stopped her from being very bored.’

**Improved child’s safety**

‘To keep my child safe around the house and live healthier.’

**Has not helped**

‘It hasn’t really helped everything I practically do myself as I find my Health Visitor pretty useless.’

### 2.5 Use of childcare services

Almost half of the parents/carers had used informal childcare (49%) or playgroups (47.1%) during the previous year, while just under a quarter had used day nurseries (23.5%). The use of out of school clubs/holiday play schemes (7.8%) or childminders (4.9%) being less frequent (see Figure 13). The ‘other’ category referred to parent and toddler groups.
Parents/carers who were registered with Sure Start were more likely than their counterparts to say they had used a crèche and informal childcare, but less likely to have used a day nursery or playgroup. Only those who were registered had used out of school/holiday play schemes and no one had used specialist childcare for children with special needs or disabilities.

Compared to those from other areas parent/carers from Shiremoor were most likely to say they had used a day nursery, while more of those from Killingworth had been to a playgroup. Informal childcare was most likely to be cited by parents/carers from Moorside, Backworth and West Allotment.

When asked how these childcare services had helped them and their family 67 parents responded. The most popular comments included: the opportunity to meet new people/children (26), it has helped my child to socialise/mix (23), it has given me a break (19), it has allowed me to work (19), it has given me/us time to socialise (8), it has given me the opportunity to learn new skills (4), it has helped my child be more confident (3), it has enabled me to attend meetings (2), it has helped my child to play and share (2) and it has improved my confidence (2). Examples of these and other responses included:

**Opportunity to meet new people/children**

‘It has given me the opportunity to learn new skills and meet new people and improve on confidence.’

‘Chance to meet other parents and other babies.’

‘Meet other parents. Go to work part-time. Continue development of play and social skills for my baby daughter.’
‘I attend a group where mothers and babies meet. It has enabled me to meet other mums and my daughter gets to play with different toys whilst interacting with other babies. I gain advice and talk to people in the same situation.’

‘Nice meeting other mums in the same situation.’

**Helped my child to socialise/mix**

‘Helped my child to share and play nice with other kids.’

‘Helped my 3 year old build confidence and learn social skills. Also allows me to work.’

‘It has definitely helped my son to socialise and generally speak a bit more out of the house.’

‘Ducklings/Boogie Books very good for learning to interact.’

‘Help prepare my children for nursery learning to socialise with other adults and children. Problem solving, sharing understanding of cultures and religion.’

‘It’s helped my child interact with other children and has given me a chance to meet other parents my age.’

‘This helps my son to socialise with children his own age. Gives me time to spend with my 6 month old daughter.’

‘It’s given my child the chance to socialise and also given me a break and I think she has become more confident in herself.’

**Has given me/me and my partner time to socialise/have time alone**

‘Given me and my partner more time together.’

‘It gives me the opportunity to get out and socialise and to give me a couple of hours break and for my son to meet other kids.’

‘Improved my life by being given a place at Sure Start Childcare for my child to give me time alone.’

**Enabled me to work/study**

‘If it wasn’t for my mum looking after my children I would not be able to go to work.’

‘It has enabled me to go to work knowing my child is being looked after in a friendly educational environment.’
'Gives me the opportunity to work. Also on occasion I am able to have a break. I like to socialise with other mums and the children as I believe the interaction brings my child on.'

'Able to work full time with knowledge that child is being looked after excellently.'

'Able to work my shift by having childcare.'

'Day nursery allows me to work. Playgroup allows my son and myself to mingle in the community, both making new friends.'

'I've been able to go back to work to provide for my family. Plus it has learned my son a lot and to get involved with other children.'

'Helped my studies/work by providing childcare as well as helping my child meet other children of the same age.'

'It has let me go to college so I can ensure a secure future for my daughter, it has also let me go out and socialise'.

Enabled me to attend meetings/courses

'Enabled me to attend meetings and have a break.'

'Been able to put my child into a crèche has enabled me to attend courses, meetings and to socialise with other parents and it’s helped my children to socialise with other children their age.'

Aided child’s development

Taking my child to playgroup has aided his development. Good information about childcare has made doing back to work easier.'

'Childs language and social skills have benefited from the play group.'

General comments

'The play scheme [holiday] for the younger children is brilliant as there is nothing for under 8s to do (without costing a fortune!).'

2.6 Use of play and learning services

As Figure 14 illustrates the majority of parents/carers said they had been to parent and toddler groups (55.9%) and playgrounds or parks (52.9%) during the last 12 months, almost half had also visited soft play (45.1%). While a third had used library services (33.3%), use of the other listed activities was lower, but this probably reflects their specialist nature. The ‘other’ responses included: yoga (2), swimming (2),
Parents/carers who are registered with Sure Start are more likely than those who are not to say they attend parent and toddler groups, baby massage and use library services. Only those registered with Sure Start have attended fit bodies/healthy bodies and cooking on a budget. The use of soft play and parks was found to be the same for both groups.

Parents/carers from Killingworth are more likely than those from the other areas to say they attend parent and toddler groups, soft play, parks, library services and baby massage.

When asked how using play and learning services had helped them or their children 59 parents/carers responded highlighting the following: it has been fun (25), it has allowed us to meet new people (20), it has helped my child to socialise (12), it has improved my child’s confidence (5), it has improved my confidence (4), it has encouraged my child to play/interact better with other children (4), it has helped my child’s development (4), it has given me support (3), it has helped prepare my child for nursery (3) and it has given my child different toys to play/interact with (2). These are other responses are given below in the parents/carers own words:

*Have fun*

‘Child has fun and it introduced us to other families. The library has helped educate me in parenting skills through books available and also my child in reading skills.’

‘D… enjoys his baby massage. I get to meet new parents and find out about more things.’
‘My son has fun when he goes to soft play and park and makes friends with other children.’

‘Child has fun- leading to development in social, physical and language skills.’

**Enabled us to meet new/other people**

‘Introduced me to other parents and children. Different toys for children to play with.’

‘My child likes to be with other children and it’s nice to meet people who have children.’

‘Again meeting people, chatting, finding out how other mums manage. My daughter enjoys being out and about.’

‘Introduced us to other parents and excellent for child’s interaction.’

‘Helped children to meet other parents and children.’

**Helped child socialise/interact better**

‘Helped my child socialise and have fun, meeting other parents, good exercise and fresh air.’

‘It has enriched our children’s lives and made them more socially aware.’

**Increased my/child’s confidence**

‘I’ve used these to build my confidence up and also for my child to socialise with other people.’

‘Helped my child’s confidence whilst we have fun. Allows us to meet others. Also provides us with confidence in each other.’

**Helped child’s development**

‘Importance of reading at an early age. Enjoying books and taking care of them. Encourage gross motor skills through soft play.’

‘Library has toys and books to develop learning skills.’

‘Developmental help with helping my daughter to read and learn by observation.’
**Given me support**

‘Provided support. Been a nice thing for us to do together. Good experience for my child. Fun!’

**Prepares child for nursery/school**

‘Gets children mixing ready for school.’

‘Helped my daughter and son get ready for nursery.’

‘With me running a local toddler group I have found that my child is getting ready for going into a nursery class- learning to share toys and meeting other children isn’t new and that she’s used to it.’

**Learned to cook on a budget**

‘Help to make healthy food on a budget.’

‘Learned how to cook on a budget.’

**Opens up new opportunities**

‘It is my first course but I hope that it gives me the chance to open new doors for me and for my child to develop with kids his own age.’

### 2.7 Use of Support for Parents

Very few parents said they had accessed support or information for themselves during the previous twelve months, with only 12.7% saying they had used information or advice on services available to parents, 11.8% on caring for children or 10.8% on training or courses (see Figure 15). The ‘other’ information or advice received had been about Sure Start.

**Figure 15 Support for parents used from mid September 2002-September 2003**

![Graph showing support for parents used from mid September 2002-September 2003](image-url)
• Compared to parent/carers who were not, those who were registered with Sure Start were more likely to say they had used: advice/information about services available to parents and advice/support about caring for children during the previous 12 months. Only registered parents/carers said they had accessed advice/support at home in for example the form of a family support worker, advice/support about training/courses and counselling,

• There were no key differences in between the three areas.

18 parents/carers described how the information, advice or support they had received had helped them, explaining that it had made them feel more confident (8), increase their skills (4), helped their child be more confident and sociable (2) and helped them to be sociable too (2). These and other comments are outlined below in parent/carers own words:

*Increased my confidence*

‘Made me more confident with breast feeding’.

‘Increased my confidence finding out about things for my children.’

‘Helped my confidence for meeting people also increased my skills and to be more sociable.’

*Increased skills/knowledge*

‘Have become aware of what we are entitled to and not- which in the case, not money wise since my partner and me both work full-time.

‘I found out about what benefits I should be getting.’

‘Been able to find out what training and courses are available – has given me confidence and increased my skills, which can all go on my CV.’

‘Help mainly around caring for my third child and coping with a larger family. This has improved our standard of living.’

*Increased child’s confidence*

‘Helped my child to be more confident and being able to take my kids different places.’

2.8 Involvement in Sure Start

As Figure 16 reveals almost three-quarters of parents/carers had heard of Sure Start (74.5%) and over half (54.9%) felt they know what Sure Start is about. Almost half have used Sure Start services (44.1%), over a third had been to a Sure Start event (34.3%) and a quarter had received a visit from a Sure Start worker (25.5%). Although only 9.8% said they had participated in
the planning stage, this probably reflects the fluid nature of the Sure Start target group, while score of 10.8% for involvement in parents’ groups highlights the range of active parent-centred groups being supported by the programme.

Figure 16 Awareness/ Involvement in Sure Start

- Awareness of Sure Start was similar for both registered and non-registered parents/carers, although perceived knowledge of the programme was highest among those who were registered. Meanwhile, participation in the initial consultation, attendance at Sure Start events, being visited by a Sure Start worker and using Sure Start services was understandably higher among registered parents/carers. As would be expected only registered parents/carers said they act as volunteers/help run services and are on the Sure Start partnership.

- There were no marked differences between the areas.

67.6% of parents/carers said they would like more information on Sure Start – the level of requests was similar regardless of registration status or area.

2.9 Ideas for service provision

18 parents/carers suggested additional services for children aged under 4 and their parents/carers. The most popular suggestions were:

- More playground facilities and parks (6) - this was mainly requested by parents/carers from Killingworth
- More playgroups (5) – requested by parents from Shiremoor and Backworth, Moorside and West Allotment, not Killingworth.
- Swimming (3)
- More after school facilities (2)
- Improved bus services (2)
These and other suggestions listed by sole individuals are presented below in the parent/carer’s own words:

**More activities/provision at different times**

‘I would like to see toddler groups held at weekends for parents who work or are in full time education during the week’.

‘More activities in the afternoons for under 4s in Killingworth’.

‘More after school facilities.’

‘I would like to see more after school activities for children who are under eight and play schemes in the holidays’.

‘My son will be going to school next year so I will need either a child minder or an after school group – I only work part time at the moment so I’m able to drop and pick up my son from nursery. But when he goes to school I would like to go full time which is going to be a problem getting him picked up.’

**More/better parks**

‘More parks in Killingworth area. More advice on free services i.e. parenting classes, etc’.

‘Better parks, bus services, activities at the local sport centre’.

‘Children’s park in Killingworth which is clean and safe. Or the current park rebuilt. A low liner bus service available at set times between Killingworth and metro or Newcastle/coast or Cramlington.’

‘Parks or play areas – outdoor or indoor i.e. large toys – bikes, cars etc.’

**More toddler, play and baby groups**

‘More toddler groups closer to where I live. Mooredge Primary school is the only one and I live the other side of Killingworth.’

‘Soft play. Play groups to leave child and for parents to have a break.’

‘Baby groups – help you get to know other parents.’

**More advice on work and benefits**

‘More support for childcare for parents who need to work (Financial issues or advice about what can be claimed)’.
More publicity

‘More publicity in local shopping centre or post office.’

Weekday mornings were the most popular time for service provision (52%), followed by weekday afternoons (44.1%), whereas weekend services were only favoured by around 15% of parents/carers and the demand for evening provision, particularly at the weekend, was low (see Figure 17).

Figure 17 Preferred times for service provision

- Parents/carers who were registered with Sure Start were more likely than their counterparts to favour weekday morning or afternoon provision, while demand for provision at other times of the week was similar.

- There were no marked differences between the areas.

2.10 Additional comments

13 parents made additional comments at the end of the survey, 3 choosing to highlight their pleasure at having been involved in Sure Start and 2 expressing their support for Sure Start – these and other individual comments are highlighted below:

Information needs

‘Update more frequently re new leisure centre as the swimming pool and soft play access is up 4 flights of stairs, nor is it suitable for fire risk and health and safety issues inside the room itself.’

‘I am interested in information on baby massage.’

‘Information about work and how it affects family tax credit.’
‘I would like more information for groups for babies and parents. I would like to be more involved.’

‘I would be very interested in hearing about what services are available to me and my daughter in our area.’

‘Would have liked information earlier – only got it at 4 months, would have liked help earlier with breast feeding.’

Support for Sure Start

‘It has been really fun to be part of the Sure Start team and doing the cooking, fit bodies and parent and toddler groups.’

‘Sure Start is a fabulous initiative, keep it going. Should be permanent rather than a temporary project.’

‘Think Sure Start is a life line to all parents, I can always call on my community midwife if I need any help or advice – first class.’

Lack of facilities

‘I really feel there is a lack of facilities in Killingworth. I used to use the Barnardos Play Den with my oldest son which was fantastic. Close to the centre. It’s a big miss.’

‘I would like to see more parks and play areas in Shiremoor.’

Concerns about nursery waiting lists

‘It would be helpful for parents to know if you have a nursery place – waiting lists mean you tend not to know soon enough especially if you have work commitments.’

Perceptions of Sure Start

‘Most people I speak to about Sure Start feel it is only for unemployed or people who are in poverty areas.’

Cost of childcare

‘Although I feel the cost of childcare is reasonable I also feel it is unfair to have the same cost for morning and afternoon sessions. Morning session is from 7.30/8.00- 12.45 and includes breakfast and a full good lunch (veg, meat and pudding). Afternoon 12.45-6.00 however it only includes a small tea (sandwiches, crisps, etc). I would like to see a slightly lower cost for afternoon sessions’.
3. Summary and conclusions

3.1 Overview

At 75.5% the survey revealed a good level of satisfaction with family support services, but particularly in relation to health services, childcare and general support. However, three-quarters of respondents were dissatisfied with parks, indeed this was an recurring issue throughout the survey and suggests more needs to be done to encourage the local authority to improve it’s provision. Only half of all respondents were satisfied with the availability and accessibility of services. Although on a lesser scale, the cost of childcare was another area of dissatisfaction amongst a quarter of respondents.

Around 2 in 5 respondents thought services had improved during the previous 12 months, improvements in the amount of information available for parents being most frequently mentioned.

Looking at health, most respondents had seen a GP, Midwife or Health Visitor during the previous 12 months, but only a third had received dental advice.

With regard to childcare, informal childcare and play groups were the most frequently used, while a quarter used day nurseries, but few went to childminders – is this preference or availability?

Parent and toddler groups and parks/playgrounds were used by a majority of parents and their children, while only a third used libraries.

Few parents said they had accessed support for themselves, the main thing they had used being information/advice on the services available to them. Only 1 in 10 had used information and advice on work and training – although this may reflect the number already in work or who see themselves as full time parents/carers.

Three quarters of respondents had heard of Sure Start and over 50% felt they knew what it was.

The most requested additional services were for more playground facilities/parks and more playgroups.

Looking at respondent characteristics: almost a third of respondents with children aged 0-4 also had one or two children aged 5-11 years- their needs must also be considered when planning holiday and weekend activities. Plus almost 1 in 5 of the parents consulted live a lone with their child/children. Three-quarters of those questioned live in a household where at least one adult is in paid employment.
3.2 Registered parents compared to non-registered

Respondents who were registered with Sure Start were more likely than their counterparts to express overall satisfaction with family support services and to think that services had improved during the previous 12 months. More of them were also satisfied with the friendliness of staff and believed that the support available to parents, health services for parents and children, and the number of things for children to do had increased. Overall, registered parents were more likely to have used all of the listed health services, informal childcare, crèche, parent and toddler groups, baby massage, library services and to have accessed information on available services. They were also the only ones to have used out of school/holiday provision, support/advice in the home, advice on work and training, and counselling services.

Meanwhile, those who were not registered were more likely to be satisfied with the cost of childcare and to use day nurseries and play groups.

3.3 Sub-areas

Killingworth: Compared to the other areas more Killingworth respondents expressed overall satisfaction with family support services. Indeed, they were most likely to highlight satisfaction with: support for parents both generally and in the home; help to access work and training; staff friendliness; the cost of childcare; and the availability and accessibility of services. When considering service improvements over the previous 12 months, they were also most likely to highlight improvements in the amount of information and support available to parents, and in health services for parents. In terms of services used, more Killingworth respondents said they had received advice/support on breast feeding, visited play-groups (indeed this was the only area not to request more), and used the listed play and learning services.

Shiremoor: More respondents from Shiremoor thought services had improved during the previous 12 months. Compared to the other areas, more expressed satisfaction with health services and were more likely to have received nutritional and dental health advice; while the service area they were most likely to think had improved was childcare. Furthermore, respondents from Shiremoor were most likely to say they had used a day nursery.

Backworth, Moorside and West Allotment: Respondents from this area were least likely to express satisfaction with family support services, but most likely to have received advice/support from Health Visitors/Midwives, advice on weaning, have been to an antenatal class and to have used informal childcare. Compared to the other areas, more respondents expressed satisfaction with childcare provision, but fewer thought access to employment and training advice had improved.

There were no distinct differences between the areas in relation to support for parents or involvement in Sure Start.
SureStart
Shiremoor & Killingworth

PRIZE DRAW
A CHANCE TO WIN

Have you heard about Sure Start Shiremoor and Killingworth?

Yes ...........................................  □
No ...........................................  □

Are you from? (please tick)

Shiremoor .................................................................  □
Killingworth ...............................................................  □
Moorside, Backworth or West Allotment ......  □
None of them.................................................................  □  If none, please do not continue.

And are you the parent or full-time carer of a child aged 4 or under? (please tick)

Yes .........................  □
No .........................  □  If no, please do not continue

Then you could help Shiremoor and Killingworth and win vouchers from a local supermarket to the value of £100 by answering this questionnaire.
Sure Start Shiremoor/Killingworth is giving this questionnaire to local families with children under four years, because:

- we really want to hear your views about all services supporting families in the area, not just Sure Start services
- your answers can will help us to develop the best possible services for pre-school children and their parents in your area.

This is not a test, we just want to know what you think - your opinions are very important to us. It should only take 10 minutes to complete and if you don’t know the answer to a question or it doesn’t apply to you just leave it blank.

Thank You for Your Help

If you would like to be entered into the PRIZE DRAW or would like more information on Sure Start please fill in your details below - both this and the front sheet will be removed from the questionnaire before analysis to ensure confidentiality- your name will not be linked to the answers you give.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YOUR VIEWS ON LOCAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN UNDER 4 AND THEIR FAMILIES

Q1. Overall, how satisfied are you with services and facilities for children under 4 and their families in this area? (please tick one)

- very satisfied ...........................................  □
- fairly satisfied ........................................  □
- neither satisfied or dissatisfied..............  □
- dissatisfied .............................................  □
- very dissatisfied ......................................  □

Q2. How do you feel about the following services for children under 4 and their families in this area? (please tick one answer on each line)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playgroups / nurseries / toddler groups / childcare</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost of childcare</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local play facilities e.g. parks and play areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health services i.e. health visitor/midwife/nursery nurse</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The help available to access training and employment</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of support available for parents generally</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of support available for parents in their home, e.g. visits from Family Support Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accessibility of services (can you get to them?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of services (are they there when you need them?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people who provide the services are nice/friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q3. Overall, do you feel services for children under 4 and pregnant women have become better, stayed the same or become worse over the last 12 months? (please tick only one)

∨

Better .........................  ☐
Stayed the same ......  ☐
Worse .........................  ☐
Not able to say ...........  ☐

Q4. Have the following aspects of services for children under 4 and pregnant women become better, stayed the same or become worse over the last 12 months? (please tick one answer on each line)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Not able to say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of things for children to do</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare facilities</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of information available for parents</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of support available to parents</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health services for children</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health services for parents</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of help available to access training and employment</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q5. Which of the following health services have you used in the last 12 months? (please tick all that apply)

- Antenatal classes/birth classes
- Baby clinics
- Visit / advice from Health Visitor or Midwife
- Visit to see GP
- Advice / support on breastfeeding
- Advice/support on weaning
- Advice about diet and nutrition for all the family
- Speech and language therapy
- Advice / support on how to give up smoking
- Contact from a Sure Start Worker
- Advice on preventing accidents in the home
- Dental advice
- Other (please write in below)

None of these

Q6. How has using these services helped you and your family (e.g. improved my health, improved child’s language/behaviour, helped us live more healthily, etc.)?

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________
CHILDCARE SERVICES

Q7. Which of the following childcare services have you used in the last 12 months? (please tick all that apply)

- [ ] Day nursery
- [ ] Playgroups
- [ ] Creche
- [ ] Childminder
- [ ] Out of school clubs/holiday play schemes
- [ ] Informal childcare i.e. babysitting, using a relative
- [ ] Specialist childcare for children with special needs/disabilities
- [ ] Other (please write in below)

- [ ] None of these

Q8. How has using these services helped you and your family? (e.g. it’s given me the opportunity to work, study, meet other parents, have a break, get advice; it’s helped my child socialise, be more confident, etc.)

- 
- 
-
PLAY AND LEARNING SERVICES

Q9. Which of the following play and learning services have you used in the last 12 months? (please tick all that apply)

- Parent / toddler groups ................................................................. ☑
- Soft play.........................................................................................
- Play grounds / parks ......................................................................
- Library services ............................................................................
- Baby Massage ............................................................................... ☐
- Fit bodies/healthy bodies..............................................................
- Cooking On a Budget ................................................................. ☐
- Aromatherapy Massage .............................................................. ☐
- Other (please write in below)............................................................

________________________________________

None of these...................................................................................... ☐

Q10. How has using these services helped you and your family? (e.g. provided support, helped my confidence, introduced us to other parents/children, child has fun, child’s language/behaviour improved, etc.)

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________
SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

Q11 Which of the following support services have you used in the last 12 months? (please tick all that apply)

- Information/advice about services available to parents
- Advice/support for parents about caring for children
- Advice/support at home e.g. visit from Family Support Worker
- Advice/support about training/courses
- Counselling services
- Advice on benefits and money
- Advice/support on finding employment
- Advice/support for parents for whom English is an additional language

Other (please write in below)

None of these

Q12 How has using these services helped you and your family? (e.g. helped my confidence, increased my skills, helped me get a job, helped child to be more confident/sociable, etc.)

SURE START

IF YOU HAVE HEARD OF SURE START PLEASE GO TO Q13
IF YOU HAVE NOT PLEASE GO TO Q 14
Q13 To what extent have you had contact with Sure Start? (please tick all that apply)

- I have heard about it
- I was consulted at the planning stage
- I have been to a Sure Start Event
- I know what Sure Start is about
- I am registered with Sure Start
- I have had a visit from a Sure Start worker
- I have used some Sure Start services
- I am involved in the Sure Start parents' group
- I am a volunteer/ help provide a Sure Start service
- I am on the Sure Start Partnership

Q14 Are there any other services or activities you would like to see provided for children under 4 and their parents/carers? (please list below)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Q15 What times of the week would you prefer to access such services or activities? (please tick all that apply)

- Monday-Friday mornings
- Monday-Friday afternoons
- Monday to Friday evenings
- Saturday- Sunday mornings
- Saturday – Sunday afternoons
- Saturday-Sunday evenings

Q16 Would you like further information about Sure Start?

- Yes
- No
ABOUT YOU

THANKS AGAIN FOR ALL YOUR HELP. PLEASE COULD YOU ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS- THEY ARE THERE JUST SO WE CAN SEE HOW VIEWS ARE DIFFERENT BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE.

Q17. Are you?

☑ Male
☐ Female

Q18. Which age group are you in?

☑ Under 20
☐ 20-29
☐ 30-39
☐ 40-49
☐ 50-59
☐ 60 or over

Q 19a. How many children live with you?

____

b. How old are the children in your household?

Child 1  ------  Child 4  -------
Child 2  ------  Child 5  -------
Child 3  ------  Child 6  -------
Not applicable ...

Q20. Do you and your child/ren live with? (Please tick only one)

☑ Your partner
☐ Adult relatives
☐ Other adults
☐ No one else
☐ Not applicable
Q21. Are you? (please tick only one)

- In full time paid work (30 hours or more a week) .......  
- In part-time paid work (less than 30 hours a week) .  
- Unemployed- but looking for work  
- Unemployed- but not looking for work  
- Retired  
- A full-time mother/father/carer  
- Other (please write in below) 

____________________________________

Q22. Is any other adult who lives in your home in paid employment?

- Yes 
- No 

Q23. Are you? (please tick only one)

- White- British/Irish 
- White- other 
- Black-British 
- Black- African Caribbean 
- Black- other 
- Asian- British 
- Indian 
- Pakistani 
- Bangladeshi 
- Chinese 
- Mixed 
- Other (please write in below) 

____________________________________

Q24. Is there anything else you would like to add?

____________________________________

THANK YOU FOR HELPING SURE START - YOUR ANSWERS WILL HELP US PROVIDE BETTER SERVICES FOR LOCAL FAMILIES.