



**Evaluation of  
Shelton / Cobridge / Hanley SureStart  
Women's Sewing Group: A Short Story**



<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	3
Methodology	3
Context	4
Progress to date	4
Access to services : the “SureStarter” approach	5
Race, language, ethnicity	8
Training, community education and qualifications	9
Observation	13
Sustainability	17
Conclusion	19
Bibliography	20
<i>Appendix 1 – Case Study</i>	21
<i>Appendix 2 – Interview Schedule</i>	24
<i>Sewing Class Policies</i>	25
<i>Sewing Machine diagram</i>	26
<i>Mitre Corner diagram</i>	27

**2004**

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## **Introduction**

The aim of this evaluation was to look at the impact of employing a local woman to lead a sewing group, to document the process of establishing the group, to analyse it in terms of sustainability and to describe who accesses the group. See Appendix 1 for the research proposal.

## **Methodology**

The evaluation specifically did not aim to evaluate outcomes for individuals but employed a case study method and takes the group as the unit of analysis rather than focussing on individual women and children. Guidance provided by the National Evaluation of Sure Start team suggests that programmes “focus more on [evaluating] the process of providing services ... rather than the child development outcomes.” (Henderson et al 2002, p4)

The main research method used was observation of one group session and a semi-structured interview with the group co-ordinator. These research techniques were complemented by analysis of documentary material including reports provided by the co-ordinator and the Programme’s Baseline Delivery Plan. Other useful sources of evidence were monitoring data from the Programme database and the register for the group.

## **Ethics**

Guidance was sought from Shelton / Cobridge / Hanley's lead accountable body which is North Stoke Primary Care Trust. The Director of Clinical Governance authorised the evaluation design. Research participants' informed consent was obtained by means of explaining the purpose of the evaluation to the sewing group co-ordinator who presented the information leaflet to members of the group and obtained their verbal consent. (see Appendix). During the analysis it became apparent that it would be impossible to completely anonymise the identity of the group co-ordinator. The co-ordinator was presented with the final draft report and she agreed that the report gave a fair representation of the observation and the interview. She realised that her identity could be determined from the report and consented to this and to the report being disseminated.

## **Context**

Shelton / Cobridge / Hanley Sure Start programme incorporates the city centre of Stoke-on-Trent and surrounding residential areas. The "Sure Start" population is made up of ethnically diverse families including white British, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and some Chinese and Polish families (Sure Start Shelton / Cobridge / Hanley Delivery Plan, p 17). The delivery plan lists some of the strengths and weaknesses of the area. Amongst the weaknesses are "Community perception of the failure of the SRB [Single Regeneration Budget] funded projects and thus some apathy and negativity towards any new initiative" and "Accessibility to many of the services, including childcare, is difficult either due to cultural or transport issues." The delivery plan goes on to discuss some of the difficulties faced by programme staff in trying to engage black and minority ethnic communities in Sure Start consultation. (Final Delivery Plan, p.19). Apparently some husbands have made it difficult for some women to get involved in community activity. The plan does not

state whether this issue was specific to any particular ethnic group but it does appear to recognise constraints over women's lives within some families. "Consultation fatigue" and sensitivity in reaching parents within diverse communities are acknowledged issues that other SureStart programmes have had to face. ( NESS 02/July 2002, p.45).

### **Progress to date**

The sewing group began in December 2002. On average, six women attend the group. Maximum attendance for any one week has been eight and minimum two. It operates weekly between 12.30 and 2.30 with a crèche for participants' children. The crèche is run by Sure Start staff to OFSTED standards. Activities of the group have included familiarity with machine sewing, the development of a personal folder to record achievements and instruction sheets, producing story sacks for "Owl Babies" and "Humpty Dumpty ", floor cushions and curtains. Story sacks include a story book and stuffed toys and other objects that relate to the story to enable the child to act out and play the story. The Humpty Dumpty story sack has been designed to contain enough separate pieces to enable a group of children to play with the story together. (see Forde and Weinberger 2001 for a useful report on story sacks as developed by the Foxhill and Parson Cross Sure Start).

### **Access to services : the "SureStarter" approach**

A major barrier preventing women from accessing support services is accessible child care. Sure Start Hanley / Shelton / Cobridge offers a crèche that the members of the sewing group take full advantage of. There is clearly a challenge for programmes to engage with families and address their needs in an area associated with socio-economic hardship but to do so in a sensitive way that maximizes uptake of services. As is recognised in the Birth to Three Matters literature review, this area-based approach may result in false

positives – i.e. support and assistance to those who would have thrived anyway. This is accepted because the benefits of a non-stigmatised approach are seen to outweigh the disadvantages of overtly targeting those regarded as in need or at risk in some way. As reported in Early Experiences of Implementing Sure Start, (2002) several programmes mentioned a “perceived tension between the provision of a universal and a more selective service for families in the Sure Start areas.” (p 64) NESS report 01/June 2002. The evaluation notes these tensions but does not seek to resolve them.

Sure Start services are expected to be flexible and innovative to respond to the needs of families with pre-school children. This local programme devised a “Sure Starter” scheme at the developmental stage of the Programme, promoting the opportunity for people in the local community with good ideas to come forward and seek practical and financial support. In this case, a local woman who herself has young children, expertise in teaching sewing and local knowledge approached the programme manager with the idea of the sewing group. She was granted Sure Start funding for 3 sessional hours per week at college tutor rates and monies to purchase equipment including sewing machines.

**P :** *So, can you tell me about the process - how you came to set up the group?*

**N :** *Right, well – I sew for a living, that’s what I do, and ...um ...when I was talking to P initially from Sure Start ... there was a number of things that P wanted to get up and running to get people involved and..um..we were discussing playgroups ...er ... things for the children. And then somehow we got onto the subject that I sew and then P had asked me if I’d be interested in doing a class – you know, something for all the women to be included in. And I jumped at the opportunity cos I love doing things like that. So .. .um .basically we just started*

*from there. P gave me the go ahead and told me, you know, to let her know what she needs and how we would go about it so...um...I gave a list of machines and things that we'd need to run the class and we put in a proposal and a costings sheet and P gave me the money and we went and sorted it out.*

**P** *So when you did that was P sort of advertising Sure Starter start up grants?*

**D** *Um..no because it was they hadn't really moved in to the building at the time. I'd come across Sure Start – how did I come across Sure Start? I think it was when they did an open day at the Victoria Hall in the very beginning and I won a bag of goodies cos I put my name down for meetings and things like that. And...um... before I wasn't working at the time and I'd set up a playgroup in the past and I've set up other projects in the past and I enjoy doing things like that. So when I had got to know Sure Start it was an opportunity. It was slightly easier because Sure Start had got like the finance and they've got the contacts in a way whereas before I'd done it all on my own and it was a much bigger project cause I had to find everything out and apply for funding from different people so..um..so when I went to see P then P mentioned it to me. But they hadn't started advertising because it was so early on in the day that they hadn't even settled in to the building and all the resources were sort of spread out. But because I was active anyway I saw the opportunity and we sort of put it together.*

This excerpt from the interview illustrates the skill, experience, enthusiasm and entrepreneurial spirit of a local woman and is enough in itself to contradict the perception in the Delivery Plan of “apathy and negativity towards any new initiative.” (p. 18). This process of initial engagement with

parents took skill also on the part of SureStart staff. D comments on her view of crucial factors influencing how Sure Start staff relate to parents:

**D:** *But I know it's about the staff. Some of the ladies [staff] who have gone in and its not so much that they are qualified, it's the way that they do it. It's their mannerisms and their attitude and how they sort of discuss it with the parent and encourage the parent. Because if you go in there with a condescending kind of attitude, no matter how long you go for, the parent or the child is not going to make any benefit or gain from the services at all. But if you've got the right kind of people introducing it where its more fun then there's an enthusiasm to be more involved.*

This emphasis on a non-judgemental approach and an emphasis on fun appears to be key to initiating this successful relationship between parents and SureStart.

## **Race, language, ethnicity**

**P** *But the group isn't purely for Asian women is it?*

**D** *No, no. I mean we have had English ladies that have joined. One of the members is Italian and we've got Pakistani ladies. I mean it's open to everybody, whoever would like to join, and some of them that have joined have gone on to other things. And of course they enjoy the class because there are other Pakistani women there of similar backgrounds, similar age group with children and things like that.. .er... cos a lot of them don't get the opportunity to get out of the house. Not that they are housebound but they're limited as to what they can get involved in.*

**P** *In terms of what's acceptable?*

**D** *Yeah, and what's appropriate, like as far as their husbands go. And then there's the time issue and like their husband expects them to be there and cook the food and things like that you know. So it's fitting it in around your husband kind of thing. So that's where now things are starting to happen cos Asian people are coming together cos they know that sewing is acceptable.*

The co-ordinator is a white woman who is married to an Asian man and adopts a Muslim dress code. She speaks English but no Asian languages.

**D** *We've had some in the past – ladies that weren't fluent in English but we managed to overcome that problem because we got a mixed class. Because we've got some people who are English/Urdu speakers so they can help by translating. I would say more and more ladies are*

*able to speak English but have lack of confidence in their own home. .... I mean I think when the ladies join, ladies who aren't very confident, it does help them cos with me only speaking English I can't give them the easy option of speaking Urdu or Punjabi, you know, so they do have to make a little bit more of an effort to be a bit more attentive and so by listening. I mean obviously listening is one of the first ways to pick up a language then it's just a question of building the confidence of speaking.*

This is an example of language learning in an incidental way as opposed to the formal objectives of an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) class. Monitoring records show that members' languages include Punjabi, Urdu, French, Italian, and English. The group's register shows that the group has been regularly attended by between six and seven women. The use of the Programme monitoring data identifies how women categorised their ethnicity for themselves although there have been changes in recording practices. The session that was observed was sensitive to the Muslim religion, respecting Ramadan and celebrating Eid but was also attended and enjoyed by non-Muslims.

### **Training, community education and qualifications**

- D :** *Just cos there's not a qualification doesn't mean they're not learning.. We had discussed getting some kind of certificate and its something I'd say probably, not probably, I'd say we would like to achieve later on. But the flexibility of not having the qualification is that this group is based on what the women want to do. I don't choose the projects*
- D :** *There came a point when the women said well, do you mind if we don't do that, if we do this. I think they need that flexibility. I think that's the reason its been so successful and so enjoyable because they choose.*

*They decide as a group and they feel like they are in control. And like I've basically said to them, you know, you choose, you tell me what you want and we'll put it into action for you. So that's sort of given them the flexibility. And then also because, when you have other issues like, say, some times we've had a full class, other times we've had 2 members, so then it slows down, so your scheme of work can't be so strict. It needs a little bit of flexibility.*

It should be clear from the observation and the example of sewing explanations from a work folder (see Appendix) that the women in the group are gaining real skills. At the moment these skills are not being formally accredited. I asked D about qualifications:

**P:** *Can I ask you about training, qualifications, paid work – a lot of funding as you are probably aware, is tied to qualifications.*

**D:** *I've got two views. Personal – I left school with no qualifications and didn't sit for GCSE's. Since then I've had to work to pay my rent. Opportunities – there are more now than there was then. Having said that I've got this far in life and I haven't got any qualifications. Well, I've got like a Basic Food Hygiene and First Aid, but I've got no Diplomas. There are two points that come into it. There's the point that if you want something badly enough, no matter what comes up against you, if you really want it you can get there. And I think I am a shining example of that cos you know I've come this far. That doesn't mean that I don't think education isn't important but I think that people aren't given the opportunity that they need because they don't have a qualification. If their personality isn't strong enough to put themselves forward then they would rely on that qualification to make people realise what they are capable of. So it is still critical to have an education. Having said that I am studying at the moment – a teaching*

*qualification I abandoned and started again. A lot of women have managed to establish various certificates – computers. A lot of the ladies are now able to work in the schools and the nurseries as bi-lingual assistants cos there is a language barrier so its given the ladies an opportunity,...*

Part of the aim of the research was to conduct a brief literature review including a review of community education policies. In fact, time constraints have only allowed for a cursory reading of some pertinent literature. A useful piece of research is a report produced by another Sure Start programme about the experience of a story sacks project (Forde and Weinberger 2001) This report details how the Open College Network has accredited courses for story sack making. Other useful literature about adult learners may be accessed via NIACE – the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal is highly relevant to the Sure Start programmes in Stoke-on-Trent. A key document that discusses many of these issues is Realising the Potential: Recognising Residents' Achievement in Neighbourhood Renewal (2003). The Birth to Three Matters Literature Review sponsored by the national Sure Start Unit is a comprehensive review of academic literature relating to child development and a report by the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) team on the early experiences of Sure Start programmes is also drawn upon for this evaluation.

Rosemary Deem, writing in 1986, discussed the policy tensions around the vocational / non-vocational divide within adult education. She writes "...as though it were possible ... to distinguish clearly between pleasurable learning and painful or 'serious' learning." (p56) It can be argued that these tensions persist today and that funders of adult learning, in particular the Learning and Skills Council, emphasise accredited, vocational courses. However, the Learning Curve (NIACE 2003) which is the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's

strategy for developing skills and knowledge, does recognise the importance of “learning from action and informal learning”. (p14). It could be that Sure Start has a particular role to play in funding the informal learning activities that other bodies cannot or will not. However, I would also suggest that, where appropriate, Sure Start Shelton / Cobridge / Hanley should maximize the programme’s resources by working in partnership with training organisations so that they can access Learning and Skills Council funding and so that they can offer accredited courses *where these are what parents want and could benefit from*. As well as the social interaction and skill development for the women, children benefit in similar ways from playing with the story sacks at home and from attending the crèche. The co-ordinator explained how one woman had asked to join the sewing group and said

*“ ... my daughter doesn’t get involved and have enough interaction with other children. I’m worried because she is going to school next year and she has never been left and I don’t know how she’s going to cope.”*

This woman joined the group, her child went to the crèche and the co-ordinator reported :

*“ Her child looks forward to it every week – she gets excited – so there is a huge gain there ...”*

This is clearly an example of how Sure Start Shelton / Cobridge / Hanley is working towards the aim of improving childrens’ social and emotional development.

Progress reports by the group’s co-ordinator note that :

“ the students are acquiring skills” ... and the class has also given Sure Start the opportunity to help the ladies to overcome a variety of

problems from confidence building to depression ... The class has become very important to the students as they channel their frustrations to produce excellent work and have developed a social bond with each other. “

An observation of a session enabled some insight into this social bond and is presented here in the present tense as a micro-ethnographic account with minimal interpretation.

### **Observation**

During an observation of the group, I see evidence of some advanced needlework skill within the group as there is talk of “eyelets” and fastenings. See Appendix 3 for examples of the skills that women are learning about machines and different sewing techniques. There are classroom-type chairs and a couple of modern sewing machines with overlockers out on side tables ready for use. The tutor tells me that the group is making a story sack. Whilst eating and drinking there is some intense discussion about how to stitch Humpty Dumpty’s mouth so that it can turn from a sad to a happy expression and still be safely fastened on.

I introduce myself to the tutor and she asks me to wait downstairs in the reception area while she discusses with members of the sewing group whether they will allow me to observe the session which takes place on the third floor. I get a phone message giving me the OK and enter the room with slight trepidation. The tutor asks me to introduce myself and explain why I am there. I explain that I have come to observe the session so that I can add gain an understanding of what happens there to add to other information that will inform evaluation. I hand out typed sheets to each of the five women present with an explanation of my research and my contact details. I am not sure where to sit and so at first I take a place in a corner, aiming to be unobtrusive.

Another woman joins the group late and I move. The room is somewhat cramped with a large square table in the middle. There would not be room for the group to be much larger. There is a kitchenette area off to the side, large windows to two sides, large storage cupboards on another side and a whiteboard on the fourth wall. There are photos displaying past Sure Start activities.

This is an atypical session as it the last one to be held before Christmas and also before the tutor goes on maternity leave. She tells me that her baby is due in a couple of weeks. She has brought food and drink to share – some of it appears home cooked and there are vegetarian options. I am invited to join in and I do so. At this point I fall silent and do not make eye contact. There is some chatter about childrens' Eid and Christmas parties and halal and vegetarian food. The food on the table is tidied away and more components of the story sack are fetched from the cupboard. There is a wall made out of a tartan fabric, king's horses and king's men which have previously been screen printed by a member of the group and Humpty himself. Someone points out that these are "*stuffed with fire-proof stuffing.*" However, the session does not become formal – the casual chatter continues whilst the women get on with their tasks. The tutor has assigned specific tasks – two women are completing the drawstring sack, one is machining, one is stitching Humpty's mouth and another is still eating. One woman remarks "*Hey girls, I'm so proud of this story sack*" and later adds "*This story sack does look the business*". This is to be a group activity toy. There is a very relaxed, calm atmosphere. The tutor has a calm, quiet but confident manner. She is clearly responsible for the activity of the group and is keen that they should understand their task, complete some tasks today and know what will happen for the next few weeks while she is off having her baby. There is a sewing pack with fabric, haberdashery and pattern for each member of the group including for a member who is absent today. These packs are to produce a "Tell the Time" story sack.

An Avon cosmetics catalogue comes out and there is some transaction going on with people discussing orders. There is some mention of a waiting list to join the sewing group and reference to one or two people who no longer attend. Two people exchange addresses for the first time. This is an example of the group enabling new friendship contacts between people who otherwise are unlikely to have met socially.

There is a discussion about a virulent strain of flu' which has been in the news. Someone remarks "seven children died". This shows the way in which social groups provide the opportunity to discuss lay health concerns. There is some discussion about cars and clearly there are some women who have their own car in two car families. One woman has several children and remarks that they "*knacker me out*". There is also a comment from a group member about being a "*normal mum ... a proper mum, ... a happy mum.*" Her small child makes her very happy – she "*Can't live without her – can't get enough of her*". This shows the hard work that raising children can be as well as the sheer joy of love between mother and child.

This chatter is not always amongst the whole group – there are opportunities for people to share more private, possibly more sensitive conversations. The tutor and other group members seem comfortable with this and respectfully allow these more private chats to happen.

"Someone remarks "*when I come here it takes me all morning to get ready – I look forward to it.*" This comment demonstrates the value that this woman places on attending the group and echoes the statement in the tutor's report that "The class has become very important to the students." The pleasurable anticipation of the activity enhances the enjoyment of the actual session. Whilst not wishing to stretch the point too far, it seems reasonable to infer that such a feeling of enjoyment adds to overall well-being and could contribute to

warding off depression in mothers. Research cited in the Birth to Three Matters Literature Review cites research carried out by the Mental Health Foundation which concludes that programmes aimed at enhancing the mental health of children and their families need to be “ ... positive, **non-deficit, culturally sensitive** ... and so matched to participants’ needs.(p 136). [my emphasis]

One of the sewing group members is also a member of the Sure Start Programme Board. She suggests taking the completed story sack to show off to the Sure Start sponsor group (a multi-agency group of parents and professionals that incorporates several Sure Start Programmes). She says “*It would be great to advertise ourselves –‘look what we’ve achieved in the last 11 months’.*”

Although this is clearly an outgoing confident woman, there is another quieter woman struggling with the sewing machine. The tutor gives her careful, patient attention.

The tutor sums up that the group has achieved what it expected to by next April – “*Three items to benefit Sure Start as a whole – Our Baby story sacks, crèche curtains and Humpty Dumpty.*” Someone asks “*Can we make what we want to make as well?*” Someone wants to make *shalwar kameez* and another asks “*Can we do a bit of pattern making?*” The tutor suggests bringing in a pair of children’s pyjamas to use as a pattern. There is lively chatter and the tutor asks them to pay attention to her “*Don’t get distracted and stop gossiping ‘cos I won’t be here and you’ll all be saying ‘I don’t know what I’ve got to do’.*”

One member of the group reminds them that she will be leaving as she has found a job that uses her sewing skills. It is not possible to say to what extent this was as a direct result of attending the Sure Start group as it is not known

what skills she had to start with. There is some informal chat about training courses and work (paid and voluntary). Someone says that she doesn't understand what the effect would be on her benefits. There is no authoritative response to this within the group. However, monitoring data from the programme demonstrates that members of the sewing group have accessed a wide variety of other Sure Start services including Citizens Advice Bureau, psychology services, community development, play groups, speech and language services etc. it seems that the group functions as part of an overall "jigsaw" of Sure Start services accessible via one front door. These services will be addressing a variety of needs but it is not the purpose of this evaluation to delve into the individual experiences of sewing group members. Indeed, to do so, may expose individuals beyond the realms of confidentiality.

The tutor explains to me at the end of the session that she is handing responsibility for collecting the £1 weekly fee to the new member of the group who happens to be a relative. Written progress reports about the group document the process that the group went through in deciding amongst themselves what fee to set and how to spend the money on haberdashery etc. There is also evidence that the group has been through an organic, evolutionary process of developing a set of policies ( see Appendix 4 ) This type of learning experience is recognised and valued within The Learning Curve : Developing Skills and Knowledge for Neighbourhood Renewal which suggests that "... consensus building and mediation" are useful skills when working at the neighbourhood level.

The session ends and the women leave to collect their children from the crèche. Humpty Dumpty is taken by the tutor so that she can finish the toy at home. She remarks "*We got a lot done even though we've had the party.*"

## **Sustainability**

The tutor is concerned to ensure that the group will continue for the short period of her maternity leave. The group is currently funded by Sure Start Shelton / Cobridge / Hanley until April 2005. Any decision about the future of the group must include the views of the participants. They should have the opportunity to discuss whether they are interested in accredited training and learn from the experience of other Sure Start programmes who have followed the Open College Network route.

The Programme Board needs to consider whether the group should continue for as long as the current members want it and what the maximum capacity of the group is. Alternatively, the Board could consider whether the group has served a particular purpose in the early stages of programme development in introducing women to a range of Sure Start activities.

The programme could explore working in partnership with other local bodies to promote the availability of small grants via the Community Empowerment Fund. This may act as a means of encouraging the as yet unheard voices of those in the Sure Start community who may wish to set up similar groups. This process is quite different to a service-led approach whereby staff formulate programmes according to their own availability and assumptions about what interests and motivates families and then invite families to participate on those terms. The Learning Curve explains how local residents, but also staff who are working at the neighbourhood level, need additional skills and learning opportunities.

As we have seen, the sewing group members use other services as well. The sewing group co-ordinator points out :

*“ ... the problem is making sure that it fits in with the women and I think sometimes it's not recognised – it's still not taken into consideration enough that oh well- we'll put it on this day and if they can't make it,*

*well, it's tough and I think that is still an issue. People don't realise that just cos they haven't come that doesn't mean they don't want to come but that day or that time isn't suitable. I mean obviously you can't please everybody, you know, but I think they need to do a little bit more input and research into what might be more appropriate for the women as far as the times and the days go. "*

This statement highlights the need for the Programme to remain flexible and responsive to the needs of parents. The Programme Board could be more explicit about its role in facilitating active dialogue with parents. The Programme may also wish to debate the extent to which it has a remit to develop community groups and to build their capacity to network with other organisations and perhaps become independent of Sure Start. This could be a valuable process towards the Sure Start aim of "Strengthening families and communities".

## **Conclusion**

Desired outcomes for Sure Start Shelton / Hanley / Cobridge as identified in the Delivery Plan included: **"Support for single mothers and Asian mothers including group work"** The sewing group is a clear example of a small number of mothers being able to access a social group. The activity that they do in the group is creative, skilled, productive and fun. Besides the formal skills of needlework, women have made new friends and have negotiated their own group policies. The group members access a wide range of other Sure Start services. The group is keen to "advertise" themselves and there is the opportunity for the group to expand with the move to new premises.

The challenge is now for the programme to be able to extend such valuable opportunities for as many of the rest of the Sure Start Shelton / Cobridge / Hanley population as would like to participate. Also the programme should consider whether other hobbies or interests would better meet the needs of other groups (including fathers) in the community. The experience of setting up the group denies the perception in the delivery plan of an apathetic community. Resources including time will need to be devoted to building up trust with other sections of the programmes' communities and discovering other local people (including fathers) with talent and enthusiasm who are willing to share their skills to the benefit of the community.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Proposal for a pilot study

#### 1. Case Study

##### **Womens' Sewing Group.**

There is a womens' sewing group meeting weekly at Hanley Sure Start. It mostly attracts Asian women and is led by a local Asian woman. Sure Start is targeted at disadvantaged areas but open to all who live in such areas regardless of their personal circumstances. This is a delicate balance between stigmatising people by describing them as disadvantaged or in need of support and offering universal services to people who may already have sufficient material and cultural resources.

Tacit theories / assumptions:

Sewing is often seen as a non-threatening activity to engage Asian women with community based projects. This may be a "lowest common denominator" and there could be a danger of stereotyping Asian women as being more interested in traditional female activities than, say information technology. An all Asian group may not be accessible to women whose first language is English. The co-ordinator is a local woman who appears to have come forward with the suggestion to run the group. Her motives may be more or less altruistic. This sort of informal approach and solution is unlikely to be adopted by mainstream statutory agencies whose planning and commissioning infrastructure is not flexible enough to respond to very localised demand both because the project is too small but also because acute services with defined procedures and outputs are prioritised.

There are currently no activity groups specifically aimed at men, although recent Sure Start research demonstrates the need to engage fathers. I do not yet know whether women pay a contribution towards the activity and whether the cost of the crèche is wholly subsidised by Sure Start. This would raise issues of sustainability. A community development approach would usually expect to pump prime such a group with the aim of the group taking control and responsibility at such time as they are willing and able – I do not know whether this is planned. Small grants would be available locally to support some elements of such an independent group. The group may be a means to an end - introducing families to Sure Start in a gentle way in the expectation that they would then access other services that they might need or learning work-related skills – in which case it might be expected that the group would have a fixed time period. On the other hand, it could be an end in itself and may be viewed as such by the paid co-ordinator. If group members do not need Sure Start services such as child care, family support etc. and are not

interested in paid work, then is their attendance at the sewing group justifiable? Who would decide this? Does it depend on cost? Does it depend on the achievement of health outcomes? If so, how would these be measured? The pilot study would not expect to answer all these questions but could provide indications. The research will be located within the context of evaluation with an emphasis on research utilization and an expectation that recommendations to the local Sure Start Board will arise from the case study.

The group runs weekly for 2 hours at Hanley Sure start with a crèche facility for pre-school children. The case study would consist of

- Brief literature review of theories of support networks, informal education and recreation funding policies, parenting, household economies, the importance of sewing in British Asian womens' communities, cross-cultural communication, language as a barrier to accessing health, education and social care services salutogenic models of health (non-medical)
- structured interviews with the co-ordinator and the Programme Manager to establish running costs, charging policy (if any) history of how the group set up, aims and objectives of the group, whether the group was set up in response to requests by parents or at the suggestion of the co-ordinator seeking paid employment, whether in fact this difference matters, any informal and formal decision making processes and expectations for the future of the group.
- observation of one session which may be more or less participatory depending upon the outcome of the interviews. The observer will take notes, looking for interaction, signs of friendship and trust, signs of opportunities for learning skills, opportunities for emotional support, topics of discussion, whether women appear to feel comfortable in the environment, how breastfeeding mothers may be catered for.
- analysis of documentation including membership records, attendance register, publicity material (if any) to determine the main language used by members at home, ethnic identity of group members and the co-ordinator, age of children, numbers of children, whether other services are accessed by the sewing group members, how people were recruited to the group, how frequently they attend and whether some participants may have dropped out.

### Generalisability

Findings should be generalisable to other support groups that use recreation as a means of engaging people with other services and to other support groups whose members may not be fluent in English.

## Sample

Ideally, the whole sewing group (estimated 8 people), the co-ordinator and the Programme Manager.

## Language

If sewing group members do not communicate easily in English then the options are to employ a bi-lingual researcher to conduct the observation or an interpreter or link-worker to support the researcher. There would then be additional factors to consider in transcription and analysis.

## Ethics

Informed consent will be obtained from all research subjects to allow the researcher to observe the session. Confidentiality will be assured and research findings will anonymise individuals. Subjects will be given an explanation of the research – the fact that it will be used for evaluation purposes as well as personal training and accreditation. Members of Sure Start will have already given consent for their personal information to be stored but advice will be sought from the PCT officer with responsibility for data protection as to whether additional informed consent is required to access the data for evaluation and research purposes.

## Research governance

There is a procedure to obtain PCT approval for research to be hosted and supported by the Trust where the research involves :

- NHS patients, i.e. those subjects recruited by virtue of their past or present treatment by the NHS including those treated under contract with the private sector
- Foetal material and in vitro fertilisation involving NHS patients
- The dead in NHS premises
- Access to records of past and present NHS patients
- The use of, or potential access to, NHS facilities (including NHS staff)

The only one of these categories that could apply to this pilot study is the last. The proposal will be submitted to the PCT officer responsible for research governance for clarification that the procedure need not apply in this case of a very small scale study with relatively low risk of exposing subjects to harm and with no cost implications for the PCT.

## APPENDIX 2

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

History of Sure Starters

How many Sure Starters projects ?

How were they promoted ?

Were any “bids” unsuccessful ?

What was the start-up investment ?

What are the recurrent costs ?

Is there a difference between Sure Starters and the current process of commissioning?

Describe the process of setting up the sewing group

What are the benefits

- A to women
- B to children
- C to the Programme ?

Is the group aimed primarily at black and minority ethnic women ?

Have there been any unexpected outcomes?

Would you describe this as a “service”?

Is the activity sustainable within the programme?

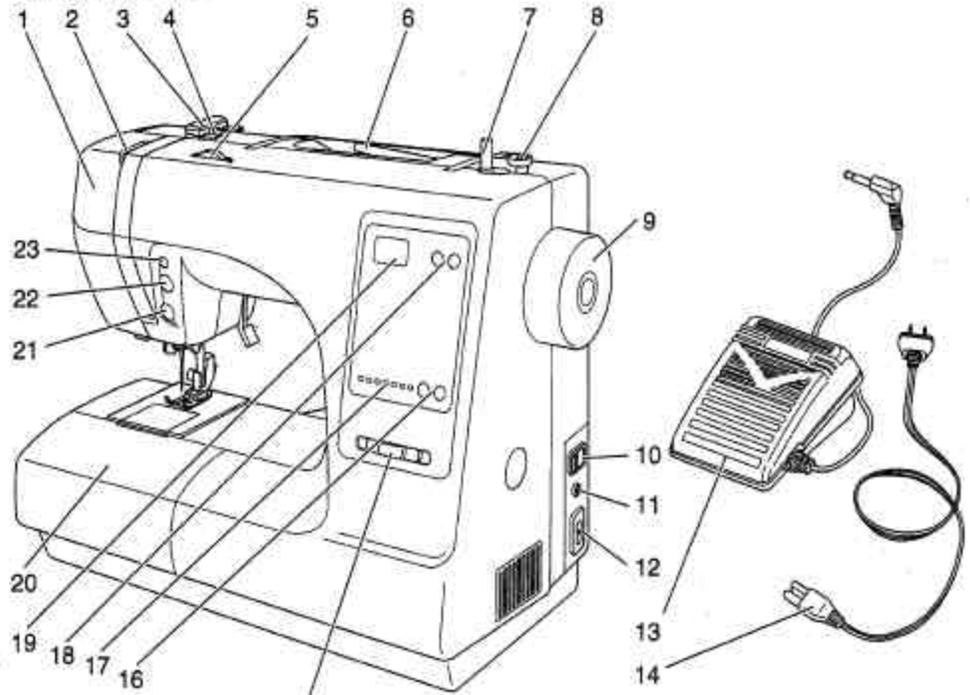
Would you envisage it as part of an ongoing extended service?

## Sewing class :Policies

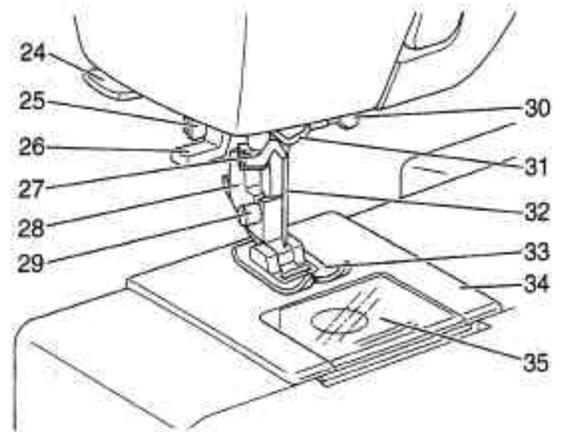
1. *All students are responsible for the care of any equipment used e.g. pins, scissors, sewing machines etc.*
2. *A fee of £1 is payable in class every week even if you do not attend: 'This funds the class materials*
3. *The class should be attended regularly.*
4. *If you don't attend for three consecutive weeks, your place may be given to another student waiting to join.*
5. *All projects that we undertake will be discussed in class.*
6. *All policies that need to be added will be discussed in class.*

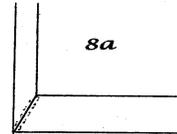
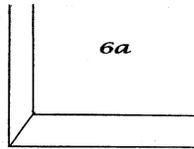
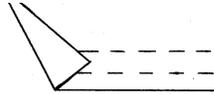
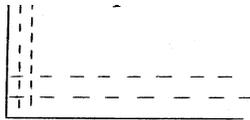
- 2.Thread Take-Up Lever
- 3.Upper Thread Guide
- 4.Bobbin Winder Tension Disc
- 5.Thread Tension Regulator
- 6.Spool Pin
- 7.Bobbin Winder Spindle
- 8.Bobbin Winder Stop
- 9.Hand Wheel
- 10.Power Switch
- 11.Controller Plug
- 12.Terminal Box

- 14.Power Line Cord
- 15.Speed Control Button
- 16.Stitch Length Buttons
- 17.Stitch Length Indicator
- 18.Stitch Selection Buttons
- 19.Stitch Number Indicator
- 20.Extension Table (Accessory Case)
- 21.Start/Stop Button
- 22.Reverse Stitch Button
- 23.Needle Up/Down Button



- 24.Thread Cutter
- 25.Buttonhole Lever
- 26.Needle Threader Lever
- 27.Needle Threader
- 28.Presser Foot Holder
- 29.Presser Foot Thumb Screw
- 30.Needle Clamp Screw
- 31.Needle Thread Guide
- 32.Needle
- 33.Presser Foot
- 34.Needle Plate
- 35.Slide Cover





1. Place material wrong side up.
2. Measure in from the side 2 cm fold and iron. Then fold and iron again. So in total you have folded 4 cm.
3. Measure up from the bottom 8 cm fold and iron. Then repeat. In total you should have folded up 16 cm.
4. Now open up the folds as in diagram 4a.
5. Fold diagonally in as in diagram 5a the long side 28 cm and the short side 7.6 cm.
6. Now refold the original fold lines. The end result should appear as in diagram 6a.
7. Sometimes it is necessary to adjust the diagonal fold in No. 5 to complete the corner accurately if the original folds in No. 2 and No. 3 were not exact.
8. To complete the corner slipstitch the corner as in diagram 8a.



4a

Fold line  
APPENDIX 3 ii



5a

How to produce an un-even mitre corner.

