SURE START LYE, RUFFORD AND WOLLESCOTE

EVALUATION OF PARTNERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

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We Research It Ltd
The Office
St Mary’s Crescent
Uttoxeter
Staffs ST14 7BH
01889 564739
enquiries@weresearchit.co.uk

Mercian Research Associates
1 Freehold Street
Quorn
Leics LE12 8AY
01509 621200
deb@indigogroup.co.uk
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Executive Summary

I do believe in the project, and I really do think there’s going to be a massive input in this area, and I think it’s going to go from strength to strength now (steering)

Enthusiastic about Sure Start. You see their shoulders go up when they are doing well and see moms there and they have something to do with Sure Start and it lights up their eyes (external)

Trips this year and last year is amazing. Brilliant (parent)

This evaluation was commissioned in December 2003. The researchers were Helen Kara from We Research It Ltd (WRI) and Debs Sambor from Mercian Research Associates (MRA).

The researchers interviewed twenty-two members of the steering group, ten representatives of external partner agencies, and five local parents. Health visitors and midwives interviewed seven local parents. Interview questions were developed in conjunction with the task group. Interview data was coded and analysed using NVivo software.

The programme has experienced a number of difficulties over the last year around finding suitable premises and appointing staff including the Programme Director and Parent Participator. These are key roles and a full time Director, Keith Alexander, finally took up post in November 2003. The programme has made great strides since then in establishing a focal point for Sure Start and appointing more staff. The six-month risk assessment acknowledges these early problems and considers that the programme has made considerable progress in the last six months, such that it is classified as low risk.

There appears to be great optimism within the programme, but the evaluation shows that there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure the effectiveness of partnership working. This is to be expected for a programme in such an early stage. The evaluation should be used as a learning tool and to ensure that those areas that need attention are targeted and not overlooked.

The overall findings were that the partnership is working well in some areas and joint working is starting to develop with some organisations. Strengths of the partnership include the early involvement of two committed parents and the strong links with the three primary schools in the area. However, the partnership is not yet fully integrated, and there are problems in communicating with, and providing information to, external partner agencies and parents and carers in the community. There is not yet full involvement from the voluntary and community sector and people in the local community. Particular problems were identified with involving people from black and minority ethnic communities in all levels of the programme.
List of Recommendations

(NB: for a full understanding of the rationale for these recommendations, you will need to read the discussion of each one, on pages 44–53 of the report.)

1. Work with existing steering group members and external partners to identify each other’s priorities and how to work together.
2. Work with partners to identify shared target groups of children and families and formal mechanisms for referral.
3. Establish mechanisms for data sharing.
4. Keep stakeholders informed about Sure Start’s progress.
5. Finalise and implement the draft communication strategy.
6. Provide accurate information about Sure Start’s operations to all statutory and voluntary agencies working in the core area.
7. Take time to build strong relationships within the steering group and with external partner agencies.
8. Create strategic as well as operational links with partners who want this.
9. Set up administration procedures to ensure that telephone messages and letters are responded to.
10. Draw up an action plan to address community involvement including parents, carers, grandparents and other members of the community.
11. Involve children in consultations.
12. Provide regular information to parents in the core area.
13. Set up parents’ forums in each of the three areas as soon as possible.
14. Leaflets, flyers and posters should be translated into community languages. Consideration should also be given to translating steering group and Stakeholder Forum minutes.
15. Continue to provide interpreting services at Stakeholder Forums.
16. Look at ways to engage the voluntary and community sectors (VCS).
17. Find out what VCS organisations are working in the area and what they do.
18. Establish a clear and workable decision-making process for the programme’s management.
19. Hold a pre-meeting and a post-meeting for parents on the steering group.
20. Eliminate jargon, acronyms and undefined technical terms from the work of the programme.
21. Enable the steering group to take a fully strategic approach to Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote.
22. Joint training for external partners, staff and steering group members.
23. BME community working training.
24. Further training for steering group members (or Programme Management Group members as the change to board takes place) so they understand their roles and responsibilities.
## Glossary

This is a glossary of all the acronyms used in this report. Each acronym is also written out in full at its first use in the text, unless this is within a direct quote from someone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>Black and Minority Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCPTF</td>
<td>Communities Scotland and the Community Planning Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>CVS</td>
<td>Council for Voluntary Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCVS</td>
<td>Dudley Council for Voluntary Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>General Practitioner (i.e. a doctor)</td>
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<td>HDA</td>
<td>Health Development Agency</td>
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<td>LEA</td>
<td>Local Education Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGNTO</td>
<td>Local Government National Training Organisation</td>
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<td>MBC</td>
<td>Metropolitan Borough Council</td>
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<td>MRA</td>
<td>Mercian Research Associates</td>
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<td>NCH</td>
<td>National Children’s Home</td>
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<td>NESS</td>
<td>National Evaluation of Sure Start</td>
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<td>NOF</td>
<td>New Opportunities Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVQ</td>
<td>National Vocational Qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODPM</td>
<td>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
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<td>PAT</td>
<td>Partnership Assessment Tool</td>
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<td>PCT</td>
<td>Primary Care Trust</td>
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<td>REC</td>
<td>Race Equality Council</td>
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<td>VCS</td>
<td>Voluntary and Community Sector</td>
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<td>WRI</td>
<td>We Research It Ltd</td>
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Introduction

The Lye, Rufford and Wollescote area has three distinct communities.

The Lye area focuses around the High Street. The library, Housing Estate Office, Health and Social Services Community Project and health visitors are all on the High Street. Lye also has a Community Centre and the Ghausia Welfare Association linked to one of its two mosques, and a primary school. Lye has a high minority ethnic population, including a large number of families who originate from Pakistan, with a growing number of asylum seekers.

Rufford is near to Lye, but does not relate to Lye or Wollescote to any significant degree. Rufford has few facilities and meeting places although it does have a primary school. Rufford is culturally less diverse than Lye, but the number of minority ethnic families in the area is growing.

Wollescote is geographically distant from Lye. The two areas are linked by public transport, but there is little connection. There are few public services in the area, although there is a community centre and primary school. As with Rufford, Wollescote is less diverse than Lye, but the number of minority ethnic families in the area is growing, albeit not as much as Rufford.

At the time of writing the delivery plan, there were no toy libraries in the area and only 1.18% of children aged 0-3 had active library membership. Unemployment for the Lye and Wollescote ward was 6.3% compared with the Dudley average of 4%. The proportion of adults with below level one literacy in the ward was 31% compared with 25% for Dudley as a whole.

In 2002, according to the Child Health System, the population of children under four in Lye, Wollescote and Rufford was 849. Based on 1991 census data as used in the delivery plan, the ethnic breakdown for the district was:

- White 90.17%
- Indian .52%
- Pakistani 8.76%
- Bangladeshi .01%
- Other Asian .04%
- Black Caribbean .08%
- Other Black .09%
- Chinese .15%
- Other ethnic group .18%

The lead agency and accountable body is NCH. The partnership is led by a steering group made up of a range of agencies. The steering group is the decision-making body. They receive views from the Stakeholder Forum. Parents are encouraged to attend the Stakeholder Forum, and a crèche and interpreters are provided. Membership of the Stakeholder Forum is open. It met twice during the development of the Delivery Plan. Three sub-groups were formed from the Stakeholders Forum – capital, parents’ consultation, and
service mapping and baseline data collection. Parent and toddler groups also held meetings in three schools in the area.

On the following pages, the ethical approach to the evaluation research is outlined, and the research methods used are described. Then the findings are set out, followed by a discussion of their implications together with recommendations for action.
Methodology

The evaluation objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote partnership working. Central questions to be answered were:

1. Is the partnership working well and where could improvements be made?
2. Can we identify any gaps in partnership working?

An evaluation task group was set up to oversee the project. The group first met on 9th December 2003 and consisted of:

Keith Alexander – Sure Start Programme Director
Chris Russell – seconded from Social Services to NCH for Sure Start
Liz O’Mara – Health
Motia Yaqub – Parent Representative
Najma Ahmed – Parent Representative
Michelle Corbett – Sure Start Administration
Karen Boswell – Sure Start Finance
Helen Kara – We Research It Ltd
Debs Sambor – Mercian Research Associates

Claire Roberts, Health Visitor, also intended to be part of the group, but had to send her apologies for the first meeting.

The evaluation objectives and methodology were agreed by the task group. It was also agreed that all data would be collected by the end of February 2004.

There were initial problems with providing the researchers with contact names and telephone numbers, agreeing the final questions, agreeing venues for the researchers to interview parents and linking with health visitors and midwives for them to interview parents. These were largely logistical and communication problems. The Programme Director was very new in post and did not have contact names and telephone numbers; he had been unable to attend much of the task group meeting because of an urgent finance issue; and he was too busy with other high-priority tasks to link in with steering group members who could provide these details. The other Sure Start staff were even newer in post than the Programme Director. Also, the person responsible for commissioning the research unfortunately went on long-term sick leave soon after the task group meeting.

It was decided to hold a second task group meeting on 5th February to get the evaluation back on track and reconsider timescales. This group had different membership:

Su Roxburgh – steering group chair
Mike O’Sullivan – NCH
Keith Alexander – Sure Start Programme Director
Michelle Corbett – Sure Start Administration
Data collection with steering group members, external partners and parents started on 17th February and was completed on 30th April.

Methodology

The agreed methodology consisted of:

- Document analysis
- Internet and literature review of ‘what works in partnership working’
- All members of the Steering Group to be interviewed by telephone (see Appendix 1 for questions)
- Ten external agencies and groups to be interviewed by telephone (see Appendix 2 for questions)
- Up to 40 face-to-face interviews with parents/carers and community members at three schools and one event. The participants would be convenience sampled at available venues and as far as possible an equal number of participants from each of the three areas would be included (see Appendix 3 for questions)
- The programme to approach two health visitors and two midwives with a view to them conducting up to 40 face-to-face interviews with parents and carers during their normal working day

Data collected

- Document analysis. The researchers and Programme Director were unable to locate many documents for analysis. The researchers asked members of the evaluation task group to provide further documents if available. Documents analysed were the steering group minutes between 4th September 2002 and 26th February 2004, Delivery Plan 2003, Primary Care Health Needs Analysis Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Lye, minutes of one capital group meeting and one folder of the risk assessment.
- Internet and literature review. The researchers gathered documents from the NESS (National Evaluation of Sure Start) website, such as evaluation summaries, and also direct from NESS, such as the Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT) commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. We also looked at other partnership toolkits and academic literature on partnership working.
- Twenty-two steering group members were interviewed by telephone (see Appendix 4 for participants).
- Ten representatives from external partner agencies were interviewed by telephone. Two of the steering group members provided contact numbers for external partner agencies and made suggestions of people to contact. Eight of the people interviewed were from organisations listed as stakeholders in the Delivery Plan 2003 (see Appendix 5 for participants).
Only twelve parents were interviewed face-to-face, five by the researchers and seven by the health visitors and midwives. The researchers arranged to talk to parents and carers at Play Talk sessions at three schools. However, one of the Play Talk organisers had forgotten that we were coming so no parents were present, and only five parents in total were available for interview at the other two sessions. There were no events during the data collection period. Health visitors and midwives were initially reluctant to carry out the interviews. They became more willing as time went on, but by the end of the data collection period only seven interviews had been conducted. The reason for their reluctance is not known. The parents interviewed were all mothers. Their ethnic background was: seven white British, one Pakistani, one mixed other, two Asian British Pakistani and one we had no ethnicity data for. Six of the parents lived in Wollescote, five in Lye and one in Rufford. Two of the researchers’ interviews were conducted using an interpreter.

Data analysis and report writing

WRI and MRA carried out the data analysis using the NVivo software. A draft report was presented to the evaluation task group on June 24th 2004 for their comments and input.
Ethics

The evaluation task group judged that, given the stage in the parental involvement process that the programme had reached, it would not be feasible to involve parents as evaluators. Two parents were involved as task group members at the first meeting, and fourteen were involved as research participants (two steering group members and 12 mothers who lived in the Sure Start core area).

All interviews were anonymous and confidential. Interview data was only seen by the researchers, except for seven of the parent interviews carried out by health visitors/midwives. These interviews were posted direct to the researchers. Particular care was taken to ensure that data was anonymous when writing up findings around potentially sensitive issues raised by participants.

Although it was planned to conduct up to eighty interviews with parents and carers, convenience sampled at various locations in the core area, only twelve interviews took place. They were not equally representative of each of the three areas. For example, only one parent from Rufford was interviewed. This interview data cannot be taken as representative of parents' views in the area, but the data is nevertheless valuable and so has been included in this report.

In the data analysis, every effort was made to ensure that each point and suggestion made by a participant was used to contribute to the findings and recommendations in this report.

The report has been written in plain English, avoiding the use of jargon and technical terms as far as possible. A one-page executive summary has been included, with a list of recommendations, to make it easier to circulate the findings and recommendations.
Internet and literature review

The original question was ‘What works in partnership working in Sure Start programmes?’ We searched for evidence that would help us answer this question.

To begin with, we read all the evaluation summaries and reports that were on the NESS website (http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/) in spring 2004. There are some suggestions in these summaries and reports about ‘what works’ in making a partnership effective, but these suggestions are patchy. There are a number of reasons for this:

- not all Sure Start partnerships have chosen to evaluate partnership effectiveness
- many who have are at a very early stage
- a wide range of evaluation methods have been used
- what works in one Sure Start area may not work in another

Also, some Sure Start partnerships view partnership effectiveness and partnership working differently from others. For example, there are several different ways of looking at training for people on Sure Start boards:

- Sure Start Noel Park advocates training for parent board members ‘to help to narrow the knowledge gap’
- for Sure Start Rose Hill and Littlemore, it is the professionals’ knowledge gap that needs narrowing, so this programme advocates training for board professionals in inclusivity and empowerment
- Sure Start Denaby Main and Conisbrough doesn’t differentiate between parent and professional board members, suggesting that training should be provided for ‘less experienced Board members’.

In the evaluation reports and summaries on the NESS website, some issues are recognised by two or more programmes as increasing the effectiveness of partnership working. These are listed here:

1. Support parents to run meetings, groups and services themselves (Sure Start Barton, Tredworth and White City; Sure Start Thornhill; Sure Start Southwark Aylesbury Plus; Sure Start St Matthews; Sure Start Copenhagen)
2. Board pre-meetings for parent board members, which may be with the programme manager, another member of the management team or a community development worker or other project worker (Sure Start Denaby Main and Conisbrough; Sure Start Knowsley Northwood; Sure Start Bowthorpe and West Earlham; Sure Start Sheerness; Sure Start Noel Park)
3. Avoid the use of jargon (Sure Start Derwentside; Sure Start Peterlee; Sure Start Rose Hill and Littlemore)
4. Regular team building for the Board (Sure Start Sheerness; Sure Start Copenhagen; Sure Start Gravesham; Sure Start Highview)
5. Train parents as trainers (Sure Start Southwark Aylesbury Plus; Sure Start St Matthews; Sure Start Copenhagen)
6. Support a group of parents to administer a small grants programme for the community (Sure Start Sheerness; Sure Start Southwark Aylesbury Plus; Sure Start Euston)
7. Board post-meetings for parent board members to debrief with the programme manager (various Sure Start programmes in North and North-East Lincolnshire)
8. Joint evaluation on specific subjects with other Sure Start programmes in the locality (as is done in North and North-East Lincolnshire)
9. Importance of commitment from everyone involved and general enthusiasm for the programme (Sure Start Brierley Hill, Sure Start Thornhill)
10. Need for all contributions to be valued (Sure Start Brierley Hill; Sure Start Leeds Bramley)
11. Involve parents in evaluation (Sure Start Barton, Tredworth and White City; Sure Start Sheerness)
12. Make sure the Board is operating strategically to drive the programme forward (Sure Start Barton, Tredworth and White City; Sure Start Sheerness)
13. Employ people from the catchment area in paid posts wherever possible (Sure Start Thornhill; Sure Start Sheerness)
14. Involve local parents in recruitment and interviewing of paid staff (Sure Start Thorntree and Brambles Farm; Sure Start Sheerness)
15. Have good induction procedures for new Board members (Sure Start Sheerness; Sure Start Copenhagen)
16. Have an annual meeting to share lessons and celebrate successes with wider stakeholders (Sure Start Maltby, Sure Start North Canning Town)

Some other issues are each recognised by one programme as increasing the effectiveness of partnership working. These are listed here:

1. Listening carefully to others on the partnership (Sure Start Derwentside)
2. Ensuring that Sure Start isn’t seen as an elitist service (Sure Start Derwentside)
3. A programme manager who can make it all happen (Sure Start Brierley Hill)
4. Making it easy for new parents to join an established group (Sure Start Derwentside)
5. Move towards a parent-led Board (Sure Start Denaby Main and Conisbrough)
6. Appoint a parent chair (Sure Start Rose Hill and Littlemore)
7. Improved co-ordination of policies, programmes and services between agencies, particularly in relation to tackling cross-cutting issues and joint objectives (Sure Start Acton)
8. Work alongside community groups to promote communication with people whose first language is not English (Sure Start Acton)
9. Joint evaluation with partner agencies where targets and/or objectives are shared, to avoid ‘evaluation overload’ for the community (Sure Start Acton)
10. Enable professionals to see beyond their own agency’s point of view (Sure Start Peterlee)
11. Set systems and resources for supporting parents who want to get involved (Sure Start Barton, Tredworth and White City)
12. Ensure each group within the Sure Start programme has written terms of reference that are regularly reviewed (Sure Start Barton, Tredworth and White City)
13. Ensure that the Board has written terms of reference (Sure Start Sheerness)
14. All agencies involved in the development of Children’s Centres should come together to agree a shared vision/ethos, which will enable them to deal effectively with any changes in Government policy (Sure Start Barton, Tredworth and White City)
15. Set up and maintain clear, understandable, effective lines of communication (Sure Start Thornhill)
16. Provide access to services and resources outside office hours (Sure Start Thornhill)
17. Provide accurate information about what Sure Start can and can’t offer to all statutory and voluntary agencies working in the catchment area (Sure Start Thornhill)
18. Work to engage the whole community, including older children, teenagers and working parents (Sure Start Thornhill)
19. Reflective practice, focusing in particular on the messages given by the methods of partnership working used (Sure Start Thornhill)
20. Use creative, proactive ways of involving people from the community (Sure Start Thornhill)
21. Make local residents feel, and be, central to decision-making rather than just people being offered a service (Sure Start Thornhill)
22. Make meetings less ‘professionalised’ (Sure Start Thornhill)
23. Have a structured meeting and planning cycle which defines the purpose and membership of each meeting and lines of accountability (Sure Start Ravensdale)
24. Work with other Sure Start programmes in the locality to create change within partner agencies (Sure Start Little Ilford)
25. Take time to build strong relationships within the Board and with external partner agencies (Sure Start Little Ilford)
26. Ensure that parents are fully involved in all sub-groups and planning groups (Sure Start Bowthorpe and West Earlham)
27. Form a Service Appraisal Group with parents, local community and professionals to discuss and steer potential provision (Sure Start Bowthorpe and West Earlham)
28. Project workers work to maintain parental involvement in the management of the programme (Sure Start Bowthorpe and West Earlham)
29. Increase levels of awareness throughout the programme of what Sure Start is trying to do (Sure Start Rose Hill and Littlemore)
30. Ensure that local parents are at the centre of programme design and delivery (Sure Start Sheerness)
31. Ensure that the Board has appropriate membership (Sure Start Sheerness)
32. Involve parents in sub-groups (Sure Start Sheerness)
33. Report from parents’ forum(s) as standing agenda item for Board (Sure Start Sheerness)
34. Discuss any decisions about changes to local services with the parents’ forum(s) before they are discussed with the Board (Sure Start Sheerness)
35. Use incentives such as gym membership for parental involvement (Sure Start Sheerness)
36. Ensure that Board members understand their roles and responsibilities (Sure Start Sheerness)
37. Use an annual meeting for wider stakeholders as an opportunity to undertake election processes for the coming year (Sure Start Maltby)
38. Have equal numbers of parent representatives, statutory sector representatives and voluntary sector representatives on the Board (Sure Start Sheerness)

We were aware that although this information is likely to be useful for Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote, it doesn’t cover all aspects of partnership effectiveness. We therefore asked staff from NESS if they had access to any further information, and Debbie Allnock kindly emailed us a copy of the Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT) commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM 2000). The PAT is based on six central principles of effective partnership working, and was developed and tested on a range of partnerships by Hardy and his colleagues at the Nuffield Institute for Health in 2000 (Hudson and Hardy 2002:53). We looked at a number of other partnership toolkits reviewed by the Health Development Agency (HDA/Markwell 2003) and by Communities Scotland and the Community Planning Task Force (CSCPTF 2003). We also reviewed some of the recent academic literature on partnership working. There is a high level of agreement between academics and policy makers about the necessary requirements for a successful partnership (Powell and Exworthy 2002:23). Although this is not specifically focused on Sure Start programmes, we did find a large body of evidence of what works in partnership working in general, and in health and social care partnerships and area-based initiatives in particular, which would be applicable to any Sure Start programme.

One feature of a successful partnership is that it will identify the barriers to partnership working and take steps to minimise the influence of those barriers (Hudson and Hardy 2002:53, Leathard 2003a:116). Barriers highlighted in the literature include:

- different organisational cultures (Lovell and Cordeaux 1999:87; Williamson 2001:121; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:51-52)
- different professional cultures (Miller, Freeman and Ross 2001:78; Hudson and Hardy 2002:56)
- the time and effort needed to change established working patterns (Lovell and Cordeaux 1999:157; Vanclay 2003:169)
- the time and effort needed to maintain partnerships once they are in place (Miller, Freeman and Ross 2001:79; Russell 2001:16)
- lack of a strong leader to co-ordinate the development of the partnership (Wade and Barnett 1999:116) and effect change (Hughes et al 2000:44)
- differences between individuals’ value systems (Pheysey 1993:117; Williamson 2001:120; Hudson and Hardy 2002:54; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:111)
• lack of understanding of other people’s positions and priorities (Hornby and Atkins 2000:14)
• poor relationships between organisations or departments (Hornby and Atkins 2000:17; Hudson 2000:269)
• differences in understanding of the purpose and potential benefits of the partnership between individuals, departments or organisations (Miller, Freeman and Ross 2001:109)
• poor communication between individuals, departments or organisations (Hornby and Atkins 2000:19)
• different procedures for managing information sharing and confidentiality (Pearson 1999:17; Hudson and Hardy 2002:54)
• mistrust between professionals (Hornby and Atkins 2000:23; Hudson and Hardy 2002:54)
• inequalities in status, pay and training opportunities between members of different professions (Miller, Freeman and Ross 2001:226)
• conflicting research evidence and knowledge bases between different professions (Finlay 2000:171)
• competition for resources and power between professions (Loxley 1997:1; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:112).
• confusing terminology used in partnership working (Hornby and Atkins 2000:135-6)
• constraints of geographical boundaries (Williamson 2001:120; Hudson and Hardy 2002:54)

The literature also suggests some positive factors in a successful partnership, including:

• a good understanding by all partners of each other’s roles, responsibilities, difficulties and interdependencies (Williamson 2001:122; Hudson and Hardy 2002:53; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:52)
• partnership ‘champions’ or ‘boundary spanners’, i.e. people who can bring others together and help them to understand the actual and potential links between them (Williamson 2001:122; Hudson and Hardy 2002:57; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:50; Leathard 2003a:110)
• leadership from people who can articulate a persuasive vision of the future and formulate a clear strategy to get there (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:50-51; Vanclay 2003:169)
• widespread commitment to, and shared ownership of, the vision of integration throughout the organisations at strategic and operational level (Hudson and Hardy 2002:56; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:52; Leathard 2003a:110, Vanclay 2003:169)
• resources, including financial and human resources (Powell and Exworthy 2002:25)
• understanding of, and openness about, tangible and intangible resources that each partner can offer to help the partnership (Hudson and Hardy 2002:60; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:112)
• understanding of, and openness about, potential and actual benefits to be gained by individuals and organisations from working in partnership (Hudson and Hardy 2002:58)
• political will (Leathard 2003a:110)
• historical background of good multi-agency working (Hudson and Hardy 2002:53; Leathard 2003a:110)
• shared values (Hudson and Hardy 2002:54; Powell and Exworthy 2002:23)
• clear, shared, achievable goals and objectives (Williamson 2001:122; Hudson and Hardy 2002:55; Leathard 2003a:110; Vanclay 2003:169)
• extensive consultation leading to ‘bottom-up’ development (Leathard 2003a:110)
• communication (Williamson 2001:124; Vanclay 2003:169)
• clear lines of responsibility and accountability (Williamson 2001:122; Hudson and Hardy 2002:60; Powell and Exworthy 2002:27)
• time, and an acknowledgement that change will take time (Hudson and Hardy 2002:55; Vanclay 2003:169; NOF 18)
• mutual respect (Vanclay 2003:169; NOF 18)
• an emphasis on quality (Leathard 2003a:115)
• inter-agency training (Miller, Freeman and Ross 2001:173)
• support for innovation (Leathard 2003a:115)
• integrated information technology systems (Leathard 2003a:110)
• publicising success (Hudson and Hardy 2002:59)
• unambiguous and straightforward partnership working arrangements (Hudson and Hardy 2002:59-60)
• monitoring and evaluating progress (Williamson 2001:122; Hudson and Hardy 2002:61; NOF 54)

There are a number of resources available to help partnerships assess their position with respect to factors like the ones listed above. The PAT can help with this, as can Digging Deeper – Finding Answers developed by the Local Government National Training Organisation (LGNTO – undated), and the self-evaluation checklist on pages 61-64 of Working In Partnership: A Sourcebook published by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF – undated).

The evidence base above is drawn from research rather than evaluation. There has been little evaluation over time of the benefits or otherwise of partnership working (Leathard 2003b:38), or of the outcomes or cost-effectiveness of services delivered in partnership (Leathard 2003c:342). There has been some evaluation of partnership outputs, but little of outcomes or processes (Mayo and Taylor 2001:44). It is regarded as important to evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships themselves, as well as the quality of the services they deliver (Hudson and Hardy 2002:62). It is also regarded as important to involve all stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating partnerships in terms of outputs, outcomes and processes (Leathard 2003a:110, Mayo and Taylor 2001:52).

One defining characteristic of Sure Start partnerships is that their non-adult service users are under four years old. Even much older children are often deemed too young to participate in research. The example of ChildLine has
shown that children are capable service users (Saraga 1998:164). Other
disenfranchised groups of capable service users have achieved some level of
involvement in service planning and delivery (Braye 2000:9). However, there
are specific difficulties in involving children because of the need to assess and
respond to the changes in their decision-making competence as they grow
older (Saraga 1998:165-6). But it has now been found that even very young
children can give their views to adults using the National Children’s Bureau’s
Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss 2001:11), and children as young as two can
make contributions to strategic planning (The Children’s Society and Save the

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(All URLs accurate on 10th April 2004)
Findings

There is a general consensus that Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote is still in its early stages. There have been a number of problems that have contributed to this, such as lack of staff in post and no building as a focal point. A person was offered the post of Programme Director in May 2003, but declined to take up the post. Liz O’Mara, Palvinda Bains and Chris Russell were seconded by their respective agencies, each for half time for approximately four months from May 2003. The new Programme Director did not take up post until November 2003. There have also been problems appointing some of the other staff, such as the Parent Participator and Bi-lingual posts.

Six steering group members and two external partners referred to the fact that this Sure Start programme was still new or embryonic. Nine steering group members and two external partners stated that there were issues with not having a building or focal point. Six external partners and nine steering group members also identified lack of staff in post as an issue. This was a problem for external partners in terms of lack of communication and information, changes in contact details and no staff to link with them. The steering group members stated that lack of staff in post delayed getting services up and running, and because the Director was new in post he had a very steep learning curve.

*We’re still going through the process of workers finding out what we do, so it is very early (external)*

*Staff recruitment is the main problem with delivering the service. Hearsay from other services says that it’s difficult to appoint (steering)*

*I think it’s been a short time and the staffing and everything, and a lot of meetings seem to have been the building, the capital sub-group meetings, all those boring flipping things that just have to, you know, we just keep on and on about it! But now they’re in the new premises, I’m sure the drive will be there (steering)*

*I think it took a long time to get off the ground, but now it’s moving quite quickly (steering)*

*Because it’s three distinct areas it makes it very difficult. I don’t really want to be too negative, because I do think overall it’s been very positive, Sure Start, and overall they’ve had an uphill battle with premises and recruiting staff (steering)*

Despite the early problems, external partners and steering group members stated several very positive points about the programme. These included the commitment of those involved, parents active from an early stage, positive vibes and that it was a positive programme in general. Five people stated that one of the strengths of the programme was the involvement of the head
teachers and the relocation of Stourbridge Family Centre and a Sure Start satellite to Hob Green.

One thing is that we have been very positively encouraged by the positive vibe from Sure Start. I've been aware of the challenges Keith has been experiencing and it feels not quite properly formed yet (external).

I do believe in the project, and I really do think there’s going to be a massive input in this area, and I think it’s going to go from strength to strength now (steering).

I get the impression that there’s very strong commitment, I think it’s quite a healthy one. In comparison with other partnerships that are further down the road, in terms of the strength of the partnership and the people involved I would say that Lye is better placed (steering).

When asked how they think Sure Start is working so far, all parents who responded stated that it was working well, good or brilliant. One parent said there had been some teething problems, but it was early days.

It’s doing a good job as it is. Doesn’t need any improving (parent).

I think it’s working well. Lot of single mums or low waged, can’t afford to go on holiday. In a couple of weeks’ time we’re off to Butlins (parent).

The Programme has recently completed its six-month risk assessment. It is considered that the programme has only been operational for six months and that during that time it has managed to make good progress. The risk assessment states:

The Programme has made very good progress against all areas of the Risk Assessment and as a result has been classed as Low Risk (see Appendix 6 for full letter).

All points and recommendations have to be viewed with this in mind, that the programme is still in its early stages. However, it has proved useful to do a partnership effectiveness evaluation at this stage to identify where things are working well and where things can be improved, as well as to provide a baseline for future partnership effectiveness evaluations. Fifty-five suggestions were made by participants for ways to improve the partnership working of Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote. Although these suggestions may appear critical of the programme, they also highlight the commitment of people involved to make the partnership work well and make any necessary changes. The evaluation recommendations are based on these suggestions.

Partnership working and links

Two of the external partners and one steering group member identified examples of joint working that were beginning to work well. These examples demonstrated that co-working and co-developing were starting to take shape.
with shared targets, give and take between the partners, and referrals happening between Sure Start and the external agencies. Five steering group members stated that everyone on the partnership had different agendas and they were still looking at how best to work together. One steering group member felt that there were problems with the partnership working.

*Partnership should be two way – what can both give, not just what can we give* (steering)

*What we haven’t done is work together and said these are our priorities, these are yours and how can we work together. Think they see themselves as experts, see it as their responsibility and how to share experiences and how to work together without being threatened of taking over. NCH as well are all trying to protect their own interests. There’s a certain way of working in partnership and lots don’t understand that all partners need to feel good* (steering)

When asked how they balance priorities of their own and Sure Start priorities, three steering group members said there was no clash. Three said their employment was the higher priority, and three said the priorities were the same or linked well. One member said they had to try to fit it all in, one said ‘with difficulty’ and one said they needed to learn what each other’s priorities were and then work out how to work together. Three said they had to prioritise all the time because they were involved in so many partnerships.

*Our priorities are the same so they’re aligned. The only problem is that the partnership is only a small area from the whole borough. We balance it by trying to get extra resources to hit targets* (steering)

*I wouldn’t class it as working for the partnership, I don’t see myself as working for the partnership, I would see myself as supporting, my role within [paid employment] is priority, it’s what I’m paid to do* (steering)

Fifteen steering group members commented on capacity issues. Of these, ten had capacity problems and five said that they did not really have capacity issues. Of the ten who said they did have capacity problems, one said that they did not have problems except when meetings clashed. Four stated that they had problems because they are involved in so many partnerships, three said they had problems and had to prioritise, one said that they had capacity problems trying to maintain links and one said they had no resources for staffing. One external partner said that they did not have capacity problems. One stated that they had capacity issues in terms of the impact on administration and finance generally, and one had an issue of waiting lists due to lack of staff. One external partner said that they did have capacity issues in terms of staffing, but they addressed this by co-working and co-developing with Sure Start. One representative from an external agency said that they had not pushed to be involved with Sure Start because of capacity implications but that they would find a way if they were invited.
I think the government’s agenda for children is just so huge at the moment that everyone’s having capacity problems. You used to do a gold star service, now you do a bronze one and wing it, think that’ll do, which is awful really but it’s survival (steering)

I used to be such a neat person, and I could clear my desk up more or less, and I’m ashamed to look at it now. I’m looking at it while I speak to you and it’s disgusting. There are piles all over the place, and obviously some things are getting done better than others. Some things fall off the bottom of the agenda, but not Sure Start (steering)

I can’t afford the time for things for the partnership when I’ve got my own jobs to run (steering)

Lack of relationships with people was identified as a barrier to partnership working by two representatives from external organisations and two steering group members.

Barriers are that we don’t know people and what they do, that would break down barriers (external)

Barriers is getting to know individuals, relationship building. People can get involved in their own project and not think laterally. I know the midwife and the healthcare co-ordinator well so I may have a better relationship with them than the other areas. It gets better by trying to get continuity going. I don’t get invited to any of their meetings (external)

Two steering group members suggested that there should be relationship-building events such as another awayday. An awayday was held in February 2004 to plan for making the transition to board status. Fifteen members of the Sure Start partnership attended the awayday. A considerable amount of progress was made during the day, with enough decisions being taken to enable the facilitator to draft terms of reference for the board.

Like that awayday, whether we can try to gel more, I think the partnership needs it. I think we would benefit from that. I don’t think we’re going to gel just by sitting round a table (steering)

I think overall people have listened to everybody else and thought ooh that’s different. And I think as people get to know and trust each other, that happens more and more, and that’s where I thought the day at Pedmore House was good, because I felt we came together a bit more then, but until then we were very very separate, and I’m not like that. I enjoy a bit of banter in the meetings, it makes it easier for the parents if it’s not too stuffy (steering)

I think in the initial onset nobody was too sure who was supposed to be doing what, but now that the plan is unfurling it’s getting easier to see who fits in where. And I know now I could pick up the phone and say help me out please, to a colleague in health who I hadn’t met before Sure Start, and she would, so the networking is happening now (steering)
Links to a large number of organisations/partnerships and agencies were identified by the interview participants. There are direct links with the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Early Years, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC), Dudley Council for Voluntary Service (DCVS), Community Education Development Unit, libraries, Race Equality Council (REC), NCH, Health Promotions, Job Centre Plus, Rufford, Wollescote and Hob Green Primary schools, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Social Services. Through external partners and steering group members a huge range of links and contacts were identified, which is evidence of a really good start to their partnership working. A list of the links and contacts identified by steering group members and external partners is included in Appendix 7.

Five of the external partners said they had a direct link with the Programme Director and five of them said they had no current link, or links had broken down. Four of these were voluntary sector organisations who said that they would like to link with Sure Start, and one is a statutory sector organisation included in the plan as a stakeholder. Of those who linked there is still further work to be done to strengthen those links in terms of shared targets and co-working, but this process has begun.

I link with them to make sure they are doing it using evidence-based things that work (external)

Recently we’ve not linked as closely as we would have liked to, but we do have plans to second an officer from our service into Sure Start so we’ve got a direct link and more involvement on a day-to-day basis. Brings the benefits of our service into them and can deliver in a more user-friendly and hands-on way than we can from head office (external)

And I think we’ve got shared service targets, so in more of the open access universal services that involve children 0-4, that’s a definite area where we could link in and work very closely (external)

Fairly early days but since the start of 2004 we’ve linked in two distinct ways. We are beginning to get referrals through Sure Start. Families with additional needs 0-5 or older siblings of child, Sure Start are working with. Sometimes if they get people who are not in Sure Start core area they refer to us. On a practical level they have been very supportive (external)

Members of the steering group had different opinions of the partnership’s links.

Already had the links with Social Services, health visitors, GPs, link workers at schools etc. Not such a big impact on me, unlike Keith. I had links with mosques etc. (steering)

There’s a caveat to all these questions really which is the Director’s new in post, there’s some catching up to do. When the Director has been in post 12-18 months, and the staff team are in place, you’ve got the capacity to make those links (steering)
I think effective links I would say no. Because I don’t think it’s fully grown, we’ve had people on board and it’s all of our fault, and it seems to have been closed then, there doesn’t seem to have been any room for newcomers and other agencies tapping in. Locally, very very locally based, that’s what I’m thinking of, and I think it’s been a bit too strategic level, it does need to concentrate on the local services (steering)

Yes, it has links and contacts with all the relevant agencies (steering)

Local college, that’s quite a good link, a bit peripheral but it is there, because the college have a shop on the High Street in Lye and they develop and support projects (steering)

The ones that have been identified, we seem to have made quite good work and good progress with those, but I’m sure there are others out there that we don’t know about or haven’t worked with (steering)

I work very closely with Keith Alexander. I see Keith as opening up the doorway to me to get them in touch with people from health. I’ve provided workshops for parents with health through Keith. It’s also opened up links with the local college for aromatherapy classes etc, There’s a link there with education and health. I’ve also got a link through Sure Start with NCH so I’m hoping that will open doors with Social Services as well. I know Keith is recruiting health staff, and then we’ll be able to tap into their staff (steering)

Three of the participants had specific suggestions regarding linking at a strategic as well as operational level with other organisations.

Understanding of our concerns and scarce resources – ensure in future deputy sit on our management and vice versa. Learnt from other Sure Starts (external)

Sit on both project committees, ours and Sure Start. Not just operational connections but strategic (external)

I’m hopeful that Keith Alexander will be on the project committee at [my organisation], and I’m not sure whether Sure Start have a similar committee and whether it’s possible for myself to be part of that so we’re aware of how each centre is developing (external)

There were only four suggestions of specific statutory organisations/agencies that were missing or needed developing. These were the police, social services, local councillors and GPs. However, there is a link to social services via Su Roxburgh and one steering group member stated that they link with GPs.

Links with Social Services need developing. Some of the synergies of the service don’t come out and there can be duplication (steering)
Su Roxburgh from Social Services chairs the partnership, she is a key person (steering)

Get police involved, the community team (steering)

It’s a perennial problem trying to get GPs involved in anything outside their surgeries but it would be good (steering)

On a daily basis, between other health visitors and the surgeries, we have to make a partnership between us and the GPs. We cover two practices, and between the midwives. It’s making sure you maintain those links (steering)

Data sharing and shared targets

Two external partners stated that data needs to be shared. Two of the steering group members identified problems with data sharing.

Demographic data, lots of agencies hold them and it’s knowing who to go to for that piece of information. We have representatives from education, health and social services and they all hold specific data. We find health aren’t very able to share information, don’t know why, live birth data needs to be more accessible. From experience on another programme they had difficulty getting data until they employed a health worker (steering)

Data collection is a big issue, which I felt wasn’t ironed out by the Government before they set Sure Start up. So they’ve set up these huge targets, and telling us to collect data when they haven’t sorted out the Data Protection Act, and who can collect and access what, as far as health is concerned it’s very difficult (steering)

External partners identified the need to adopt a formal mechanism for identifying shared target groups of children and families and to look at a formal system for referrals. Two external partners stated that Sure Start need to find out what is already in place so no duplication occurs.

Formal mechanisms for identifying shared target groups of children and families and formal mechanisms for identifying the service targets so that we can identify where we can co-work together. Need to look at system of referral (external)

I think communication is absolutely key, and I think there needs to be formal mechanisms in place for identifying shared target groups of children and families, and formal mechanisms for identifying the service targets, so that we can identify where we can actually co-work together (external)

Meetings and decision-making

The decision-making body for Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote is to be called the Programme Management Group. After consultation with the Sure Start Unit, it has been agreed that this group’s membership will be:
Social Services – 2  
NCH – 1  
Health – 3  
Education – 2  
Voluntary organisations – 3  
Parents – 6 (2 from each area)  
One other to be decided

The steering group is currently in the process of moving to Board status. There were 16 steering group meetings held between 4th September 2002 and 26th February 2004. Twenty-two people and two staff each attended four or more meetings during that time period. Appendix 8 has a breakdown of steering group attendance. The Stakeholder Forum met twice during the development of the Delivery Plan. Participants identified that there had been problems with the minutes in the past. One steering group member stated that the administration was much better recently. If minutes are not received in advance of the meetings and not everyone comes to meetings then this can affect the decision-making process.

*Not everyone comes to the meetings. Sometimes they send apologies because they have other meetings. Sometimes this affects the meetings if you need feedback from parties - have to put it back and add to the next agenda. Think it’s getting better because they’re setting up meetings when everyone’s there and they can check they’re free on that day (steering)*

*Sometimes you don’t get the minutes until the next meeting (steering)*

*I go as much as I can, but there are times where I cannot go and there’s nothing I can do about it, but when I haven’t gone, you miss out on so much. I had the minutes of the last meeting but I haven’t had minutes before. You miss so much, but the administration’s getting much better, the minutes I got today I was well impressed with them (steering)*

Four representatives from external partner agencies stated that they had not been invited to meetings. The Delivery Plan states that the Stakeholder Forum meetings had open membership and were widely advertised. However, from comments received from external partner agency representatives, it appears that they do not know this and feel they should be invited. One of the steering group members pointed out that not all organisations, groups and agencies can be part of the steering group. They could however, be included in the Stakeholder Forum or task groups.

*We just haven’t been included at all. To be fair I haven’t pushed for that, partly because of the capacity issues that you referred to earlier. Had we been invited, we certainly would have found a way, but the fact that we haven’t been included in any of the discussions at all, I’ve just lived with that I suppose (external)*
Person from CVS has very broad agenda and speaks up for more organisations. We were thinking of using the premises of one group and thought we would have to invite them to join, then we would have to ask others. So many, can’t ask them all (steering)

Three steering group members stated that jargon is often used in meetings. They felt that this could be a problem particularly for parents. It was suggested that parents could be given a briefing sheet to explain the jargon.

There’s always an unequal balance for parents, fortunately they don’t have to be bored daily with the jargon and the day-to-day bureaucracy that other partners get involved with. Parents can bring an awful lot to the table which is important, but I’m sure some of it goes above their heads, some of it goes above my head and I work in it. It’s not all user-friendly and plain English (steering)

Often parents don’t contribute as much as they could. Sometimes we need to make them feel comfortable. Lots of meetings are businesslike and sometimes the jargon goes over my head. There’s not an easy way to overcome that. Briefing sheet for parents to explain jargon used may help (steering)

The core group all know each other and perhaps use jargon and shorthand and exclude people, that’s unfortunate (steering)

Another suggestion made by two members was to hold pre-meetings with parents to brief them. One person said that more awareness can lead to full consultation. Sometimes the parents have no time to think and just agree.

I think there’s some real challenges to ensure parents are truly involved locally. Long-term I’d like to see parents chairing this and being heavily involved, once it’s up and running let’s remove some of the bureaucracy and get parents involved in ownership. I know other partnerships have put on shadowing opportunities and NVQs and training and so on (steering)

Three members stated that decisions tend to be by consensus rather than a vote.

I think it tends to be a consensus, we don’t get to the stage where people are voting. If someone doesn’t agree they’ll make that known and we’ll discuss it (steering)

Two members said that they felt the decision-making procedure should be decided and clearly stated. One member felt that there was not a clear distinction between decisions that the Programme Director could make without steering group approval and those that he could not. This was also not clear for task groups such as the capital group.

Dividing line between the decisions that can be made in the steering group and elsewhere isn’t clear (steering)
He's [Programme Director] clearly having to make sure that he’s in tune with what the partnership wants and carrying out the partnership wishes, and having to learn very quickly about Sure Start's aims and focuses. Balancing the three is quite a steep learning curve for him, but I think he’s managing it well. I’ve been basically suggesting to him that if he’s facing situations in between meetings, he should be talking with Su as the chair to make sure she’s fully involved and knows what’s happening (steering).

Since the Delivery Plan, I mean there have been decisions but they’ve been more say about the capital, and the capital group have made those decisions, because sometimes things have had to happen so quickly and you can’t always wait for a partnership board meeting. I think once things settle down then the partnership board will have to make more decisions (steering).

Fourteen steering group members stated that they thought there was equal decision-making. Two said ‘think so’, two said that it depends on the decision and one said that they haven’t really made any decisions at the meetings they have been to. Two members stated that everyone is given the opportunity but they are not sure that everyone has taken that opportunity. Two members felt that decision-making was not equal.

There are some quite strong women there and if decisions are made before they go to meetings and say ‘how many for this?’ then people who haven’t had time to think about it are lost and agree (steering).

There are a few strong leaders in there who are probably the main drivers, and that’s how it’s come about…Everybody I suppose has a fair and equal part, the more dominant or stronger partners probably are the main drivers (steering).

Fifteen of the steering group members felt that everyone in the group spoke up. There was a difference of opinion whether parents speak up, two members felt that they didn’t and two felt that they did. Two members stated that some people spoke up more than others, and four felt that everyone did not speak up. Two of these people felt that the partnership was run by dominant partners.

No, not everybody. I think it’s because there’s a core group of people that understand all about it, then you get what I call the visitors who come to represent others because they’ve been asked to, I suspect, and don’t really know what’s going on. It’s not that Su chairs in such a way that she doesn’t enable everyone to join in, she chairs well but comfortably, not dogmatic, she does include (steering).

In the early days there were so many different faces, there were the key people that went to every one, but some people dropped in and out, you’d think who’s she? Then you’d remember who she is and what her role is, but I do think that stops some people from speaking up because it’s daunting (steering).

I think it’s been a productive and egalitarian board in that sense, there’s not been any hierarchical notions or anybody dominating the group (steering).
Everybody I suppose has a fair and equal part, the more dominant or stronger partners probably are the main drivers. If you look at other Sure Starts this is slightly different (steering)

Eleven steering group members said they thought other members were willing to learn and change. Two said they didn’t know. Other responses were:

Yes, I think the will is there. I think it will take a long time to reverse the cultures that have been established, and I’m talking particularly about statutory agencies, when we talk about equal partnerships and I think when the big one comes about mainstreaming there has to be some give and take, and I think when people have worked in the silos that are their jobs they find it very difficult to give and take, and I’m not aiming that at Lye particularly. Wherever we go we find it’s hard for people to let go and give a little, like in other Sure Starts where people have been seconded into teams and are paid differently and have different holidays etc. they find it hard. It is a culture change (steering)

That’s difficult, I would say there are some that need to learn and change but I may be biased in that I think NCH, whilst useful, this element of having developed this expertise and everybody needs to listen to them, I think it’s a bit edgy at times. I’d probably want them to relax a bit more and be prepared to be led and listen a bit more to the communities really (steering)

I think there’s a lot of good people on that steering group, so I’d like to say yes they would, and adapt their thinking to fit in with the needs of the local community (steering)

Willing to learn but don’t know about change. When go back to their own offices you don’t know (steering)

Well I am because I think I could do with a bit more training, just to know a bit more about my role, and someone to explain what other ways we can help, what more views can we bring into the committee to help everybody else really. I’m willing to change, I would like to learn a bit more, but I can’t say for anybody else (steering)

Health not willing to change, not the people on the group, they are willing to learn and change, but they have to influence back at health (steering)

I don’t know whether I know everybody well enough to answer it totally honestly (steering)

That’s a harder one, really, to answer, because until you get the issues that we need to change on, we won’t find out if people are prepared to change! We’re just in that change process, aren’t we. Certainly people are saying well I mightn’t be on the committee, and able to accept that, you might need someone else on rather than me. I think people have been very willing, and very prepared to think things through, and so far change (steering)
Like to say yes all willing to learn and do have to change the way we work. If you don’t change you start to stand still and eventually move backwards. Important to learn from others and that’s what partnership is all about. Think there are people there who give more than they receive and in reverse (steering)

I think in certain ways those that people have seen who initially came with their own set values and agendas, they’ve probably been much more difficult to change, whereas some are quite receptive to change and ideas, it’s a mishmash really, a mix. There are some people in the steering group that will take up a new idea, there are others that will move away from that and go with the why reinvent the wheel, this is going on somewhere else, let’s do the same thing, not take a risk or whatever (steering)

Two steering group members stated that they felt this Sure Start had been driven top down rather than bottom up. The Internet and literature search revealed that one of the positive factors in a successful partnership is extensive consultation leading to ‘bottom-up’ development (see page 14). One member stated that they felt people who considered themselves to be experts should listen more to what other people are saying.

Voluntary and Community Sector involvement

Of those who expressed a clear opinion, seven steering group members felt that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) were fully involved. Two of these stated that they can’t involve everyone, and one said that maybe more will be involved in the future. Six members said that they were involved through the CVS representative or NCH. Six members felt that the VCS were not fully involved. Of these, two responses included that the CVS was represented but representation locally was not strong. One person said that the community was not involved at the moment because they were still in the planning stage. One person said that they did not know about the community involvement except the parents and one said that local nurseries were not involved.

No. Don’t know why. Don’t know what’s needed. I think there’s a willingness, I just don’t think it’s come together yet, and I don’t think we’ve identified who the VCS should be, who we should be working with really, I think there’s still some work to be done there, and it’s really hard when you haven’t got staff in post (steering)

In this area there are a lot of community groups who are representing community groups and they don’t seem to be round the table (steering)
One participant stated that they need to look at ways to engage the VCS. Another said that they could perhaps have a large advertising campaign or a meeting.

*It is important to ensure that the local VCS are fully involved in the long term, they’re as important as the parents, we need to look at ways to engage them, I think it’s going to be important in the locality (steering)*

*I think there are a lot of little pockets of voluntary sector who do tremendous work. There’s one on our estate which deals with racial issues and equality issues, and it would be nice if they could be brought in as well because I think they would have a lot to offer. So perhaps when all the personnel are in place, a huge advertisement to let these little pockets know what we do, to bring more people on board and more ideas and probably more parents, because they will be dealing with parents that a school doesn’t (steering)*

It was felt that there is a need to involve organisations who deal with racial and equality issues (steering)

*I think because Lye generally has been an area where although a lot of activity goes on in Lye, the black and minority ethnic communities have never been seriously involved in the design or the planning of whatever is to take place. So many are a bit sceptical at the moment about Sure Start (steering)*

One of the voluntary sector external partners has not pushed to become involved in Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote because they feel that they have had bad experiences with other Sure Start programmes, particularly relating to resources and late payment of invoices.

*Have to be an understanding of where we are coming from and they can’t just second a worker from us and be a drain on our resources (external)*

*All our resources are scarce. There are issues around payment of invoices, they pay three months in arrears. We had a crisis meeting with them both and one partnership has paid £10,000 in advance. We don’t have money to stand this wait…. If we got involved with Lye we would come in with a fresh approach because we have learnt. We would ask them to purchase administration time from us and to ensure mail outs to families and general correspondence was effective (external)*

However, one of the voluntary sector external partners interviewed stated that they had received funding from this Sure Start. One of the external stakeholders stated that they wanted to be involved (but had not been invited) and they were already funded to do their work in the area anyway, so had no problem with funding issues. Of the external partners interviewed, three who are from the VCS had had dealings with this Sure Start, either by attending stakeholder meetings or by contacting through letter or phone call, and that contact had now broken down. One of the external partner representatives
from the VCS had not had any dealings with Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote but was involved in the other Sure Starts in the area.

Statutory Sector Involvement

Of those who responded, eleven members felt that the statutory sector was involved at the most useful level. Two members mentioned that there need to be structural changes in the borough with a central meeting for strategic managers. Two people stated that the mix of operational and strategic partners was good. The steering group membership is heavily weighted towards statutory sector involvement. One member felt that they had been there longer than they should be. Three people mentioned issues around mainstreaming and the move to children’s centres. It is important to have strategic input for issues around mainstreaming, but concerns were raised by two people, particularly in relation to the move to children’s centres, that voluntary sector and parental representation should remain high.

*Tension is positive and negative because clearly we’ve got to be thinking about mainstreaming. Having the local authority take is a perfect way of mainstreaming as long as other partners are brought along with it. The difficulty is the fear that partnerships may actually weaken if the local authority, particularly the LEA, seem to be taking on too much control, it could exclude other agencies and the voluntary sector (steering)*

*If issues are coming up around mainstreaming they may need to be reported at a higher level, which I know they do. They will need to be involved at all levels, operational so that front line staff know what’s going on, then as we move through mainstreaming senior officers will need to be involved. The only negative, I know we’ve discussed this recently, the breakdown of the board, there are an awful lot of local authority personnel because of how their decisions are split, education, libraries, leisure etc. At the end of the day it’s all the local authority, but that’s the nature of the beast. At the moment we need as many people engaged as possible, in the wider partnership not just the board. In the early days it’s been top-heavy with statutory partners but it’s been important to engage local authority personnel (steering)*

*I guess there are times when you could do with a more strategic input (steering)*

*I think that there need to be some structural changes across the borough to maximise the involvement of people. What’s tending to happen, when it was just the one Sure Start programme it wasn’t too bad, but now that there are three it has become very difficult to keep that level of involvement. Their role ought to be more strategic. We’ve had some discussions in terms of trying to have a more integrated strategic approach to the management of Sure Starts and family centres and things so that we have the right people represented at the right level, as far as possible without reducing decision-making at local level. That’s the balance that has to be achieved (steering)*
They were more involved in the early stages, as the process has gone on the local people have stayed with it more than the statutory bodies, and I think you would expect that in the normal course of events. Once the framework is in place their main job is done and it should be in local hands to make sure the local agenda is addressed, with the proviso that they need to keep the local group in touch with wider developments and make sure as part of their monitoring/evaluation role that the group is staying on track appropriately (steering).

I would like to see possibly them delegate to more of the working force, and let, instead of it coming from decisions from the highest people, a lot of the work force, people who are actually going to be running the initiative. I’ve got people working for me for Sure Start who would feel totally lost among all those high-ranking people from health and education, but they’re full of fantastic ideas because they’re on the ground doing it, so I would like to see more involvement from the actual work force (steering).

Community Involvement

The Delivery Plan states that there was community consultation on the plan. This consisted of:

- Existing community consultations were used such as work done by the Priority Neighbourhood Initiative and Dudley Health Improvement Service.
- Consultations led by Parent Consultation Group (seconded Programme Development Manager, staff in schools and Health Visitors). There were two phases, a questionnaire about satisfaction with current services (89 parents), and a second phase to identify types of services parents would like for selves and children. in the second phase, there were five consultation events and a Funday (110 families contributed).

Only four members of the steering group stated that they felt parents and carers were fully involved. Two of these only talked in terms of parents being present at every meeting, one stated that parents are fully involved via schools and one stated ‘as far as I know’. Three steering group members stated that there had been lots of consultation, although this was not sufficient for full involvement. Four steering group members mentioned that one of the strengths of the programme was having two fully committed parents who have regularly attended meetings right from the start. Seven members said that there needs to be more involvement, and six said that there was not full involvement of parents and carers. Other issues raised were the need to involve grandparents and foster carers (and other carers). The programme is still fairly new and some members mentioned this as a factor in parental involvement, along with the fact that there has not been a focal point such as a Sure Start building and there has been a lack of staff to begin involving the community. Three of the external partners interviewed said that they do or will involve parents and carers. Only one partner said that they do not involve parents or carers. Five external partners had not yet started to work with Sure Start.
Area we need to develop. Have two parents who come regularly and that’s it really. Both Asian ladies and need to get more parents involved. Once we’ve got an information shop in the High Street it will have a visible presence and perhaps get parents more involved. Once the services are kicking in perhaps those using services will get more involved (steering)

Overall they’ve had an uphill battle with premises and recruiting staff, but I just think there’s a big huge gap between the top people and the parents; they’ve gone along with the two parents that are involved, because they’re very good, and they’ve said we need more parents, but nobody’s acted on that, because they’ve had so many problems with recruitment, nobody’s seen it as their job to recruit parents, because we’ve all got our own jobs to do (steering)

I’ve been involved in Sure Start in other areas and this is the best I’ve seen with parents being active from an early stage (steering)

Parents are obviously key to the partnership and I think given that we haven’t had that many services we’ve had some very good involvement from parents. Some excellent involvement from two or three who have been very involved in recruitment and meetings, gained confidence, speak their mind and add to the quality of discussions. I’d like to see more parents involved, but I think that will come about as services take off and more people come to see what Sure Start is about (steering)

Having two parents who’ve been involved from the beginning and made good contributions has been really valuable, I think we would have been a poorer group had we not had that from the beginning (steering)

Once parents realise its ok they will get involved (parent)

In this area there are a lot of community groups who are representing community groups and they don’t seem to be round the table - sensitive area. Children and families with disabilities don’t seem to be round the table (steering)

Of the twelve parents interviewed, four said they had not had any contact with Sure Start and five said that they had contact. One of these had received a bag of goodies and one had met someone at Rufford school toddler group. (Those who did not respond to this question had not heard of Sure Start). Three parents stated that they would not like to be involved, three said ‘yes’, two said ‘not sure/depends’, two said that they did not have much spare time, one said that they are already involved and one said ‘maybe, need more information’.

When asked how they would like to be involved, parents either did not respond to this question or answered ‘don’t know’ or ‘depends’ (three parents). One parent stated that they just wanted information and to be told about things.

Not too deeply at first, need to know a bit more but that’s lack of confidence ‘cos I’ve not been in a group discussion for a while (parent)
Suggestions by parents regarding the best way to involve parents included meetings, people giving their opinions, speak to them face-to-face, knock on doors, put a note on the nursery door, hand out leaflets, and maybe like a coffee morning where kids could go as well, or with a crèche available, that would entice more mums (parent)

Presentation parents alone, no children, would be good (parent)

Two of the steering group members stated that there was a need to set up parents’ forums. The minutes of the steering group meeting in October 2003 stated that an event should be held to establish a parents’ forum.

There are no parents’ forums set up in each of the areas and I think that’s something that needs to happen quickly, we’re tending to use parents at the schools but their children are not necessarily in the right age group although they may be. I think there’s a big piece of work to do there (steering)

It’s quite embryonic in Lye and will take some time (steering)

Three people mentioned that it was important to involve people from the mosques.

While I was chatting to one of dads who came with his Asian wife I realised they had been given information at the mosque. They were passing it onto their wives and asking them to look after the children’s teeth (external)

People to get involved are the mosque people and they will create the biggest row if things are not right. They will say it’s not working if they haven’t been consulted. Two parents is not enough. They may represent the schools they are from or a little group of parents but they don’t represent the community. The most powerful are the mosque and the senior citizens’ group there. There’s an outreach worker at Stourbridge College who works with the community there (steering)

This is a subject where there are many different views to take into account, as is black and minority ethnic (BME) involvement in general. For example, five of the steering group members expressed that there was a lack of involvement from BME communities. Three of these people said that there was some consultation, but not enough representation at a senior decision making level. One member stated that the programme needed to employ someone senior who spoke Urdu and understood the community. One person felt that there were local organisations who deal with racial issues who were not included. One person stated that language can be a barrier to attending meetings. However, there are some links with BME communities. One of the external partners says that they have been proactive in establishing links, and one of the steering group members stated that they have been in touch with young parents including BME and that they have talked and consulted via
questionnaires etc. One of the members said that the links are developing and they are tapping into the links using the heads of schools.

From what I’ve seen, yes they have been involved, but that’s parents and carers generally, in terms of the BME communities I’m not sure. They’ve been consulted and involved, but the nature and the extent and the usefulness of that involvement I’m not sure of (steering)

Yes, parents have had quite a significant input in terms of the steering management committee, that’s something that although they’ve got the sub-groups, there’s plenty of those involvement but actually at a senior level they could have done a bit better, and I know apart from myself in terms of the BME communities there isn’t a great significance, and yet if you actually look at the wards and the census data the BME community is quite significant. Lye area probably around 15-20%. Lye and Wollescote ward, there is a big significant BME community (steering)

I think because Lye generally has been an area where although a lot of activity goes on in Lye, the BME communities have never been seriously involved in the design or the planning of whatever is to take place, so many are a bit sceptical at the moment about Sure Start (steering)

They were having difficulty in terms of accessing the ethnic minority communities, but here they had that access because of my role, but it has been difficult to stay within the boundaries of my own work remit and not to overlap. I’ve been fortunate that my manager’s been a bit flexible when I’ve gone on to do certain things that are maybe not within my role as a worker (steering)

I’d like to see someone more strategic in the Sure Start partnership who can speak the language. There are two distinct communities and you need someone who can bridge the gap between white and Asian, otherwise they’ll become segregated (steering)

Can always get an interpreter, there are people in Lye area who are highly educated and could contribute, don’t know if they’ve contacted them. There is a fear of how to work with the community, need highly skilled people to deal with that kind of thing (steering)

Three of the parents interviewed also stated that they felt leaflets/posters should be translated. Two parents stated that they should be translated into Urdu.

Of the parents interviewed who expressed an opinion, seven said that they felt people from all backgrounds and ethnicity were included. One parent said that they did not know whether they were.

One of the steering group members said that they needed an action plan to address involvement. Another said that they need to go to schools and Play Talk sessions. One of the steering group members raised the issue that they
still need to get parental involvement on the steering group from all three areas.

*We have made a commitment that we want at least two from each area, Lye, Rufford and Wollescote (steering)*

*Rufford and Hob Green there haven’t been any parents involved from those areas, we’re based in Lye so there’s Wollescote and Rufford, it would be good to have parents involved from those areas as well to represent their community (steering)*

None of the eight parents who responded knew how Sure Start plan and decide what they are going to do.

**Children’s Involvement**

Seven of the steering group members interviewed were unsure or did not think that children and young people were fully involved. Six members thought that they were involved in earlier consultations, through schools or Play Talk. Four felt that children aged 0-4 were too young to be involved, while five stated that they would like them to be involved, thought they would be more involved once the day centres were set up, or felt there needed to be an action plan to address this.

*I think the children are the ones that have the best ideas, certainly as far as the nurseries, toys and that, I think they have the best ideas what the little ones want (steering)*

*When we first set up I think we did a lot of consultation which included children and young people. I think we’ve got to move on that area, I think we’ve got to find a way now of restarting our consultations which include children, I think that’s an area we’ve not been so good at recently (steering)*

One of the steering group members felt that it would be a good idea to filter information through secondary schools.

**Training**

One of the external partner representatives felt that joint training would be of benefit, particularly around referral and providing a seamless provision.

*I think one of the other things we could look at is joint training, and probably just the points that I made from question four really, that it’s about having the seamless provision really across all levels of need covering children from 0-18 and their families, and having that referral system in place to make sure that ongoing support where it’s necessary or the intensity of support can vary where needed so we’re more responsive to individual family needs (external)*
Working with the community, particularly the BME community, is a highly skilled job. Two of the steering group members felt that it was very important for staff to have training in working in the community and race equality issues.

At the moment, everyone should go through training of do they understand communities they work with. If they don’t how can they plan services for those communities (steering)

Sure Start manager needs training in race equality and working in the community (steering)

With race equality workers if you understand about race equality issues and instances turn up then you are dealing with it and decisions will be right. If you don’t understand about race equality work then may use wrong terminology etc. Decisions will be wrong. Got to know these things. If you’re going to recruit staff you need to get in touch with community organisations and throw yourself into the deep end. Need courage to do that (steering)

When asked what their role was in the partnership, four of the steering group members responded in terms of management, formulating policies, decision-making and ensuring targets are met. Four members saw their role as advisory or to offer support. Six members answered in terms of liaison with the community or VCS to provide feedback to the partnership and give others a voice. Two members said that they were there to represent their organisation or agency, and one said that they had linked targets. One member said that they were there to maintain communication and to work together. One of the steering group interviewed had been a temporary part-time seconded Programme Director. Three of the steering group members felt that they needed more training regarding their roles or understanding of Sure Start. One of these three said that they were not sure if it was their job to gain knowledge about this from the Internet as they had not been given any information about their role or Sure Start.

I think I could do with a bit more training, just to know a bit more about my role (steering)

I think in the initial onset nobody was too sure who was supposed to be doing what, but now that the plan is unfurling it’s getting easier to see who fits in where (steering)

There were also issues of lack of understanding of other people’s roles. When asked if they understood other people’s roles in the partnership, three of the members said ‘think I do’ or ‘some of them’. Six responded in terms of representing other agencies and the community, supporting Sure Start or being ‘experts’ in their field. Two mentioned that they were there to plan the services and link plans back to their organisation plans, two said they were there to work together and one said they had linked targets. One member stated that there was a mix of strategic people, local providers and community representatives on the steering group.
I don’t know whether I know everybody well enough to answer it totally honestly (steering)

Communication

Four of the external partners interviewed stated that they had communication problems with Sure Start. Two of these have written letters but received no response, two have tried to contact Sure Start but have not received a response and one has not had any contact since attending stakeholder meetings. Of these four, two are listed as stakeholders in the Delivery Plan, two have had contact with Sure Start in the past, but there has been a breakdown in communication. A fifth external partner interviewed works with the other two Sure Start programmes in Dudley, but has not been contacted by Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote. One of the steering group also stated that a colleague has left messages but has not heard anything.

I went along to Sure Start set-up meeting ages ago. We were looking at what was needed in the area and I’ve not heard anything since. I know they’ve had changes of staff. No contact since that day (external)

I left a couple of messages … didn’t get back to me. (external)

Schools appear to have very good communication.

The heads meet very frequently, we’re all very close and very supportive of each other, so my role in that is to ensure we maintain communication and work together to make sure it moves forward as quickly as we can (steering)

The six-month risk assessment has a draft communication strategy. The strategy states that the partnership board will meet two times a year and minutes will be sent out to members within 15 working days. The steering group meets monthly and minutes will be sent out to members within five working days. Newsletters will be sent out to parents on a monthly basis. Parents’ forums will meet once a month and informal notes will be sent out to parents’ forum members within 7-10 working days.

The variations in terminology used within the programme can be confusing. For example, the draft communication strategy refers to the partnership board, but it means the group that is called the Stakeholder Forum elsewhere. Also, the Lye, Rufford and Wollescote board is going to be called the programme management group, rather than the board, when they move from steering group status.

Information

Three external partners stated that they were not kept informed. Two of these suggested that they could be sent minutes as a way of keeping them informed as they are with other Sure Start programmes. Two external partners said that they had supplied statistical or other information, but have not received reciprocal information they need. One external partner said they had
information they felt would be beneficial to share with Sure Start, but they were not involved with them.

_Been to two meetings and said we want to be kept informed. The last one must have been about 14 months ago. Nothing since although we have tried to make contact and were told the project manager post had become vacant and we would be kept informed. Heard in February that the post was filled and so we’ve been waiting for communication (external)_

_Please can we know what’s going on? (external)_

_If they can’t interact with one person, they could send out partnership board stuff and tell them where they are up to (external)_

One of the steering group members was under the impression that external partners (particularly VCS organisations) were kept informed of what was happening in Sure Start, but from comments from some of the external partners this is not actually happening.

One of the difficulties, though, is there’s only a limited number of voluntary organisations you can get on any committee, and it’s how well the organisations are and feel represented and what the communication systems are to make sure that other organisations still have a feeling of belonging to it, and I’m not sure yet how strong that is, I know that the CVS actually have a system of communicating information across their network, newsletters, information groups. I know organisations are kept informed of developments, but I’m not sure how much of a two-way process that is (steering)_

Two of the external partners said that they need clarity of who to contact for what. This was necessary particularly to enable them to refer or point parents in the right direction. Telephone numbers have been changed several times in the past, which has not helped. No doubt this will be resolved once premises are up and running, but external agencies and organisations need to be informed.

_I think really the fact that they haven’t got a clear focal point, they’re spread over several locations, and the contact for us has changed several times since its inception. The information officer role would probably help, we need to do some work in knowing who to contact for what, we don’t have the strong relationship we need on a personal level. If we get a parent from Lye contacting us we don’t always have the information we need to point them in the right direction, which would benefit everybody (external)_

NCH has a monthly area management team meeting to look at community development issues and project updates. A steering group member suggested that minutes of these meetings could also be distributed to agencies to update them.

There is not enough information being passed to parents. One steering group member stated that they felt this needs to be constant. At the steering group
meeting in December 2003 it was decided that a newsletter would be produced to provide information to the community. A sub-group made up of five steering group members (including one parent) agreed to meet to co-ordinate this.

*Information to parents needs to be constant every quarter. Parents think nothing’s happening (steering)*

*Not enough information being passed to parents or enough emphasis on how important it is (steering)*

Of the twelve parents interviewed, seven had heard of Sure Start. Five parents said they had not heard of Sure Start and five needed more information. Statements such as ‘don’t know what it does’, ‘don’t know much’ and

*If there are people like us out there that don’t know about it, it’s doomed from the start. Got a great positive name but no one knows what it is (parent)*

One parent from Wollescote said that parents are informed.

*Nursery lady informs parents (parent)*

*I think once they get a few more staff on board, that’ll make the difference, it’s the crux of the matter, they need more people, and then those people will do the groundwork like informing the parents, giving out leaflets and things like that, that’ll be good (steering)*

*[Secondary schools] they’ll have parents who have younger children as well who don’t come to one of our schools. It would be nice to let the secondary schools know what Sure Start is about (steering)*

**Advertising**

Participants also identified a lack of advertising, as well as a lack of information.

*I think it’s about raising the profile as well, I live in Stourbridge area and I get the local papers and there are bits in about Brierley Hill but nothing about Lye, so their marketing isn’t as effective beyond their patch (external)*

*I hear so many mums say ‘What’s Sure Start?’, ‘What’s going on?’, and even professionals say to me ‘What’s going on with Sure Start?’, and I think they don’t promote themselves (steering)*

However, there is some work happening to advertise and inform people about Sure Start, particularly at local primary schools. One steering group member stated that health and libraries are also starting to inform and advertise Sure Start.
Through open days in schools, even before the actual shop is up and running, people are starting to realise what Sure Start can actually offer. Health are doing a good job because they’re going in and seeing through the health visitors, telling people, and libraries have started (steering)

Parents who were interviewed said that good ways to inform people about Sure Start were:

- Posters (2 participants) in GPs’ surgeries for example, and translated into Urdu (1 participant)
- Advertising in newspapers or flyers (2 – one parent said flyers should be translated into Urdu)
- Word of mouth, face-to-face or canvassing (4 participants)
- At the nursery (2 participants)
- Schools (1 participant)
- Toddler groups (1 participant)
- Presentation (1 participant)
- Letters (1 participant)
- Leaflets (7 participants – 2 parents said they should be translated into Urdu and one parent said leaflets were no good because they ended up in the bin)

Face-to-face. Leaflets end up in the bin. Knock on doors (parent)

In the nursery. Not sure how other parents were informed. I filled in a form to receive information through the post. Assume others got the letter to send things through the post (parent)

Two of the steering group members said that more events need to be held to inform the community.

The Sure Start area and its needs

One external partner representative and one steering group member felt that there should be a stronger focus on providing advice and guidance in the area. The external partner representative stated that they have information around the needs of the area, but needed to work in partnership with Sure Start to share the knowledge.

Stronger focus on employment and advice, training and guidance rather than trips. Deprivation and need in the community (steering)

We know that advice needs in Lye are huge, because we’ve been based there for years. I can look at it from that point of view. Agencies are involved and it may be that they are obstructing things. Need to be more people working together who are already working in the area. We have information around the needs of the area. Should bring a larger group together to discuss it. They did it once because that’s how I got involved. No others because they don’t know what they are doing (external)
Several external partners and steering group members commented on the core area of Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote. There are issues regarding the three areas being spread out geographically and being quite distinct communities. The programme have decided to locate a satellite service at Hob Green to try to overcome some of these problems, together with the service from High Street, Lye.

For me, Lye, Rufford and Wollescote would not be my first choice because it’s such an unwieldy area and it’s three distinct communities. Where to place the Sure Start centre and obviously they’ve identified where but don’t know how effective that will be for this Sure Start. We are doing outreach but that’s not going to be open every day. More thought needs to go into that (steering)

I’ve known the area for a long time and the community is very isolated and it’s an ideal opportunity to make the community more cohesive and give desperately needed family guidance, so it’s just making the most of that opportunity, which they will do. Slowly, slowly is the most effective, nothing’s going to happen in a year, you need to build a solid foundation (external)

Other concern is the geographical spread of the programme is massive. Having a location on Lye High Street is not going to engage the community from Rufford (steering)

The children’s centre is going to be at Hob Green and it’s going to be near the white community there. Lye is going to be a Pakistani community. Schools, Wollescote’s half and half, Rufford’s got a smaller Pakistani community. Hob Green is further away and you will find mostly white going there not Pakistani. May balance out when Lye shop opens and they’re going to have the children’s centre there I think (steering)

However, as pointed out, any local facilities are an improvement on the current situation.

My parents, for example, if there was an issue with health, would not go up to the central clinic where most health is managed from in Dudley, because for them it’s like a trip to another country, but to have the services here, or in Lye, would be so good for them because some of them have poor parenting skills themselves. It’s going to open a floodgate for them for their own opportunities, it may lead to careers for them, or job opportunities, but more than that it’s going to be somewhere where people will sit and listen to them (steering)

One external partner and two Steering Group members stated that the possible satellite service at Hob Green was a positive step.

One of the things we’re looking to do is develop a satellite service at Hob Green, where they’re very keen to involve the community more in the school, so we’re looking at offering Sure Start services and maybe relocate an NCH family centre there, so we could in the very near future have a model operating with a very good multi-agency approach, including daycare and wraparound care, and also a family centre that already do provide services to the under-4s
but also do direct work on referrals from Social Services. If that comes together, which I think it will, it’ll be a very positive way of moving forward, and in line with what the government is looking for to give education a driving seat (steering)
Discussion and Recommendations

The Lye, Rufford and Wollescote Sure Start is still in its early stages and there have been a number of problems that have hindered its progression, such as lack of staff in post or a building as a focal point. The six-month risk assessment states that the programme has made good progress over the last six months and is considered low risk. Data collection began in February 2004 and this report is being written in June 2004, so some of the recommendations below may already be in hand. Also, in some cases recommendations have not been made because it is self-evident that progress is being made: for example, Sure Start staff are being recruited as fast as possible now, so there seemed little point in making a recommendation that this should be done. However, we also feel sure that there will be a lack of awareness of some of the issues raised by this evaluation.

Recommendations to increase the effectiveness of partnership working

Some of these recommendations may seem off-putting because of the amount of time needed to implement them, particularly for the majority of steering group members and external partners who have significant capacity problems. However, in the medium term, implementing these recommendations should help to alleviate those capacity problems by highlighting ways to streamline working practices and avoid duplication. The Internet and literature review shows that partnerships that take steps to minimise barriers to partnership working, such as lack of time, are more likely to be effective.

1. Work with existing steering group members and external partners to identify each other’s priorities and how to work together.

Two external partners and one steering group member identified examples where joint working was beginning to work well. Five steering group members said that the partnerships had not quite yet worked out how to effectively work together. The partnership need to look at each other’s priorities, and identify how best to work together to balance their own priorities and that of Sure Start, and where they can work together on joint priorities. The majority of members stated that they had capacity problems, but time investment at an early stage to identify co-working can save time and effort in the long run. The Internet and literature review shows that a clear understanding of partners’ positions and priorities is one of the elements that makes up an effective partnership.

Some work can be done on this in steering group and task group meetings, as well as in meetings with external partners, e.g. by devoting 10-15 minutes of each meeting to a presentation by one partner on their priorities. An event such as an awayday can also help to facilitate this process.

2. Work with partners to identify shared target groups of children and families and formal mechanisms for referral.
The partnership and external partner agencies need to work together to identify shared target groups of children and families e.g. young parents, families with children 0-4 or asylum seeking families. Once this process is complete, formal referral mechanisms need to be identified between Sure Start staff and other agencies. This will enable a seamless service provision for children and their families. One external partner stated that they share some targets with Sure Start and have some targets that are outside of Sure Start remit. Sure Start and that agency are starting to work together and refer children and families to each other’s service. This needs to happen with all agencies in the area that share targets, or target groups of children or families, with Sure Start. The Internet and literature review shows that this kind of integrated working towards clear, shared, achievable goals and objectives is a sign of an effective partnership.

3. Establish mechanisms for data sharing.

Two external partners and two Steering Group members identified problems with data sharing. As part of the work towards recommendations 1 and 2 above, data sharing mechanisms could also be established. These could include options such as shared access to electronic databases, written information-sharing protocols, and systematic forms of communication such as regularly circulating summaries of monitoring data. This is another example of integrated working as shown in the Internet and literature review to be a sign of a successful partnership. The review also mentions integrated information technology systems as a positive feature of an effective partnership.

4. Keep stakeholders informed about Sure Start’s progress.

Three participants from external organisations and agencies stated that they were not kept informed of what was happening in Sure Start. Two participants suggested that they could be sent minutes of steering group meetings. The draft communication strategy has communication arrows between the steering group and the Stakeholder Forum, but it is not clear what form that will take. NCH has a monthly management team meeting to look at community development issues and project updates. It has been suggested that minutes of these meetings could be distributed to agencies to update them. The steering group needs to decide on the most appropriate way of keeping all stakeholders informed. The Internet and literature review shows that poor communication between individuals, departments or organisations is a barrier to effective partnership working, and that taking steps to improve communication will help to make the partnership more effective.

5. Finalise and implement the draft communication strategy

The draft communication strategy should be finalised and implemented. The terminology in this draft strategy is confusing. The Stakeholder Forum is called the partnership board. It also has lines of communication from the steering group. We suggest, that with the move to board status the draft strategy is finalised using the board name, the Programme Management Group (rather than steering group) and the Stakeholder Forum (rather than partnership
board). It is important to use the same titles throughout, or this can be confusing. The Internet and literature review shows that the terminology used in partnership working can be confusing, and that this can be a barrier to effective partnership working; the review also demonstrates that clarity of communication assists the effectiveness of a partnership.

The draft communication strategy includes time limits on sending minutes of meetings. Once this is implemented it will resolve issues raised by members regarding non-receipt, or late receipt of minutes.

6. Provide accurate information about Sure Start’s operations to all statutory and voluntary agencies working in the core area.

All organisations in the area need information on what Sure Start is doing. They also need clarity of who to contact for what. This has been identified as increasing the effectiveness of partnership working in the evaluation of Sure Start Thornhill. Two external organisations stated that they did not know who to contact or what advice to give to parents regarding contacts. Once all (or most) staff are in post, we suggest a mailshot to all organisations in the area giving contact details. This could be administered in conjunction with an invitation to a Stakeholder Forum meeting for organisations wishing to become involved with Sure Start. The evaluations of Sure Start Maltby and Sure Start Canning Town have shown this to be a useful technique for information-sharing with wider stakeholders in those programmes.

7. Take time to build strong relationships within the steering group and with external partner agencies.

Two of the external partners and two steering group members identified the need to build strong relationships on a personal level within the partnership. The external partners identified the lack of such relationships as a barrier to partnership working. People working in the partnership including staff, external partners and steering group members need to develop these relationships. Two steering group members suggested that an awayday would help facilitate relationship building within the steering group. An awayday, or series of awaydays, could be planned to address several of the recommendations in this report. An awayday has already been held in February 2004 to plan for making the transition to board status. Sure Start staff also need to start building relationships with external partners. This links with the need to provide information to external organisations and to facilitate a Stakeholder Forum. The Internet and literature review supports this approach, as it clearly demonstrates that where insufficient time is taken to build these relationships, barriers to partnership working ensue, but where time is devoted to building such relationships, effective partnership working is facilitated. The evaluation of Sure Start Little Ilford has shown this to be an important element of the effectiveness of that programme’s partnership.

8. Create strategic as well as operational links with partners who want this.
Two of the external organisations and one steering group member stated that for full strategic links to operate with Sure Start they wanted a member of Sure Start staff or steering group member to sit on their project committee and vice versa. Strategic links of this type need to be explored. This could form part of an awayday agenda item, be discussed at a steering group meeting and/or at the Stakeholder Forum. The Internet and literature review reflects the importance of both strategic and operational links for effective partnership working.

9. Set up administration procedures to ensure that telephone messages and letters are responded to.

Four external participants and one steering group member stated that they had problems with communication. The Internet and literature review demonstrates that clear communication is key to effective partnership working. Specific problems identified by participants in this evaluation were telephone messages and letters that were not responded to. We are aware that there have been staff changes and office moves, and that staff have been very busy over the last few months so may not had time to deal with all requests. Administration procedures such as using a telephone message book to record messages and responses to messages, or an electronic equivalent, should be used. This type of record-keeping should ensure that communication links do not break down, and also safeguards the Sure Start staff against wrongful accusations.

Recommendations to increase VCS, parental and community involvement

10. Draw up an action plan to address community involvement including parents, carers, grandparents and other members of the community.

Only four steering group members felt that parents and carers were fully involved in the programme. The plan needs to be carefully thought out, and aim for real involvement in planning, designing and delivering Sure Start and not just consultation. The plan needs to include:

- Involving key people in the community including people at the mosques
- Equity of involvement in all three areas
- Involvement independent of the schools. Although the involvement of the schools is one of the programme’s strengths, it should not be relied on as not all parents with children aged 0-4 are – or want to be – in contact with primary schools
- How to involve fathers as well as mothers, carers and extended family members
- How to involve ‘hard to reach’ groups
- How to involve asylum seekers and refugees
- How to involve people from BME communities
- Staff required to deliver the plan and/or any training requirements such as equality issues and understanding the community
- Increasing parental involvement in the steering group to two people from each of the three areas
• Working towards a parent chair of the steering group/programme management group
• How the programme will raise its profile e.g. advertising

The points above are drawn directly from the data collected for this evaluation. Other Sure Start programmes have focused on involving parents in other ways, such as:

• Supporting parents to run meetings, groups and services themselves (Sure Start Barton, Tredworth and White City; Sure Start Thornhill; Sure Start Southwark Aylesbury Plus; Sure Start St Matthews; Sure Start Copenhagen)
• Training parents as trainers (Sure Start Southwark Aylesbury Plus; Sure Start St Matthews; Sure Start Copenhagen)
• Supporting a group of parents to administer a small grants programme for the community (Sure Start Sheerness; Sure Start Southwark Aylesbury Plus; Sure Start Euston)
• Involving parents in evaluation (Sure Start Barton, Tredworth and White City; Sure Start Sheerness)
• Employing people from the catchment area in paid posts wherever possible (Sure Start Thornhill; Sure Start Sheerness)
• Involving local parents in recruitment and interviewing of paid staff (Sure Start Thorntree and Brambles Farm; Sure Start Sheerness)

11. Involve children in consultations.

Consultations with young children have taken place for the delivery plan, but these consultations need to re-start. Four of the steering group members felt that children aged 0-4 were too young to be consulted. However, it has been found that even very young children can give their views to adults using established techniques such as the National Children’s Bureau’s Mosaic Approach, and can make contributions to strategic planning. This was identified from the Internet and literature review. One of the steering group members pointed out the benefits of consulting children older than four on issues that concerned younger children, as they often had good ideas on what younger children wanted. This has been done successfully in many other Sure Start programmes. It can also be helpful to link with secondary schools and/or teenage pregnancy initiatives when involving older children and young people, as every young person is a potential teenage parent.

12. Provide regular information to parents in the core area.

We understand that a monthly newsletter is planned and a task group has been set up to look at this. The task group includes one parent. As more parents/carers and community members become involved in the programme and the Parent Participator post is filled, consideration should be given to more parents being involved in the task group and producing the newsletter. The programme also needs to decide what other ways it is going to inform members of the community. Parents interviewed for this evaluation gave a number of suggestions regarding information, including posters, newspaper
advertising, word of mouth and leaflets. Parents also gave suggestions for ways to involve the community. These included: holding a meeting, speak to them face-to-face, knock on doors, coffee morning, presentation and placing notes on nursery doors.

13. Set up parents’ forums in each of the three areas as soon as possible.

This was an item included in the October 2003 minutes, but we understand that parents’ forums have not yet been set up. This is now a matter of urgency for expanding parental involvement in this programme.

14. Leaflets, flyers and posters should be translated into community languages. Consideration should also be given to translating steering group and Stakeholder Forum minutes.

Three parents felt that leaflets, posters and flyers should be translated into community languages. The only language mentioned by the parents was Urdu. The Primary Care Health Needs Analysis, Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Lye (February 2002) identifies that language is one of the barriers to accessing health services in the area. In this study, 40-44% of the participants could not read or write English, 35% could not speak it and 31% did not understand the language. The most commonly spoken languages were English, Urdu, Mirpuri and Panjabi. Hakka and Mandarin were two other languages indicated as being used by the Chinese participants. Of the participants in this study, 24% had no opportunities for education and of these 65% could not read or write in any language. This indicates a need for information to be made available in non-written forms if it is to be accessible for hard to reach groups.

15. Continue to provide interpreting services at Stakeholder Forums.

The Delivery Plan states that interpreters were provided at Stakeholder Forums. This is good practice and should continue.

16. Look at ways to engage the voluntary and community sector.

The VCS is not well represented. Four of the external agencies and organisations who said they would like to link with Sure Start but do not were VCS organisations. Six of the steering group members stated that the VCS was not fully represented and they needed to look at ways to engage them. One suggestion was to hold a meeting that was widely advertised. This should be done in conjunction with sending a mailshot giving contact numbers and information to organisations in the area and organising a Stakeholder Forum (as suggested in recommendation 5 above). The Internet and literature review shows that poor relationships between organisations or departments is a barrier to effective partnership working, and logically this can be extended to poor relationships between sectors. The relationships that exist between Sure Start and the VCS seem to be good quality, but there are more relationships to be forged.
17. Find out what VCS organisations are working in the area and what they do.

Sure Start need to find out what is already in place in the area, so they can work together with other local organisations and avoid duplicating existing services. This research has shown that steering group members and external partner agencies already have a wide range of contacts including many VCS organisations (see Appendix 7), also, the DCVS will have information on VCS organisations in the area. Some of the organisations may be informal community organisations or consultation forums. One of the external stakeholders stated that they had attended Stakeholder Forums but had no further involvement with Sure Start. They provide a service in the borough and have information on needs in the area.

**Recommendations to improve decision-making**

18. Establish a clear and workable decision-making process for the programme’s management.

Two of the steering group members stated that decision-making needed to be formalised. They were unsure what decisions the Programme Director could make without steering group approval. One participant felt that the Programme Director should be able to make some decisions such as paying out small amounts of money, but the distinction needs to be made. A structure for making decisions between programme management group meetings was decided at the awayday held in February 2004. This was that the Programme Director, the chair (or vice-chair) and one parent may make that decision together and a full report should be given at the next meeting. Only fifteen people were present at the awayday. Decisions taken on that day need to be communicated to people not present.

It was decided at the awayday held in February 2004 that each task group will have its own terms of reference and that decision-making power may be delegated to task-groups. The programme management group need to complete the delegation strategy and specify in each of the task groups’ terms of reference what has been delegated, to whom and why.

The findings of the evaluation show that steering group decisions are normally made by consensus rather than voting. No mention was made regarding the quorum. The quorum for the programme management group stated in the delivery plan was one-third of the approved membership and at least one member must be present from each statutory membership, voluntary sector and parents. The quorum decided at the awayday held in February was seven, including one parent (moving towards two when there are more parents). Members of the programme management group need to be made aware of the quorum.

The Internet and literature review shows that unambiguous and straightforward partnership working arrangements are a feature of effective partnerships.
Completion and implementation of the partnership documents will help to clarify the partnership’s working arrangements.

19. Hold a pre-meeting and a post-meeting for parents on the steering group.

One of the steering group members stated that a pre-meeting with parents would help with the decision-making process, because the more parents understand then the more they will feel able to contribute to the decision-making process. Parents will benefit from extra preparation. We recommend that a dedicated member of staff, probably the Parent Participator, should work with parents on the steering group before the steering group meetings, to discuss issues that have arisen for them from the paperwork and to ensure that they are fully prepared for the meeting. We further recommend that the same member of staff work with parents after the steering group meeting, to discuss any issues that have arisen for from the meeting itself, and to decide how to take these back to the next meeting if necessary. The Internet and literature review shows that pre- and post-meetings for parents are recognised by several Sure Start programmes as increasing the effectiveness of partnership working. The pre-meeting and the post-meeting should be held as close as possible to the steering group meeting itself.

20. Eliminate jargon, acronyms and undefined technical terms from the work of the programme.

It is clear from the evidence that steering group members are aware that the steering group use jargon, acronyms and technical terms, and they accept that this must be reduced to help those who may not fully understand it. However, the evidence indicates that this has not yet gone far enough. The use of jargon, acronyms and technical terms discriminates against anyone who doesn't fully understand the language being used. From the Internet and literature review, evaluations of several Sure Start programmes have shown that avoiding the use of jargon is considered to increase the effectiveness of partnership working. The partnership may wish to consider a number of options that can help in reducing the use of jargon:

- Produce a briefing sheet or ‘jargon buster’ for all partners
- Include a statement in the Programme Management Group (the board) terms of reference to the effect that jargon, acronyms and technical terms may not be used by members while they are conducting Sure Start business
- Use a ‘jargon box’ at meetings where any offender has to contribute a small sum of money, such as 20p, for each offence; the proceeds may be put towards a good Sure Start cause such as a party
- Encourage staff and Programme Management Group (board) members to use the facilities on the website of the Plain English Campaign at www.plainenglish.co.uk, where there are free resources for download such as guides for producing jargon-free correspondence and reports
- Arm parents with silly string and give them permission to fire on the culprit whenever they hear something they don’t understand!
21. Enable the steering group to take a fully strategic approach to Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote.

One participant said:

_I wouldn’t class it as working for the partnership, I don’t see myself as working for the partnership, I would see myself as supporting, my role within [paid employment] is priority, it’s what I’m paid to do (steering)_

Some steering group members were not clear about what their own or others’ roles were in the partnership. The Internet and literature review shows that a good understanding by all partners of each others’ roles and responsibilities is a positive feature of an effective partnership, and the evaluation of Sure Start Sheerness showed this to be a key factor in the effectiveness of that partnership.

Steering group members need to understand that they hold a very responsible, accountable role within the Sure Start programme. This could be achieved in a variety of ways, including:

- Clarify steering group members’ individual and collective roles and responsibilities, and put them in writing
- Revisit the local and national targets, and assess the programme’s progress towards them, at steering group meetings at least once a quarter

**Recommendations for training**

22. Joint training for external partners, staff and steering group members.

Once priorities, shared targets and target groups have been identified with external partners and steering group members (see recommendations 1-3 above), joint training needs should to be identified. These will include referral mechanisms and data sharing. The Internet and literature review demonstrates that joint training is a helpful factor in partnership working.

One way of doing joint training is to get everyone together for a day. This can be very effective if well facilitated, but is difficult to organise. Another way is to consider who will benefit from any training that is planned, and whether it can be made available to people from different groups at the same time. It may also be useful to make links with partner agencies who run in-house training, to find out whether spare places on their courses can be made available to Sure Start staff, volunteers and parents at little or no cost.

23. BME community working training.

Two steering group members identified the need for staff to be trained in community involvement, particularly with BME communities, and/or to employ staff who already have this experience and knowledge. Involving the community is a highly skilled job and it takes time to build up trust and links with people, particularly the hard to reach groups. One member of the steering
group felt that all staff should be trained in these skills, particularly the Programme Director. One steering group member stated that Sure Start has to be an inclusive programme at all levels, and there was not enough representation of BME communities at a senior level. One steering group member stated that a senior member of staff who speaks Urdu should be employed. Diversity needs to be built into the whole structure of Sure Start. Employing one or two people who speak Urdu and consulting with some people from the BME communities is not inclusive enough. One of the steering group members suggested that Sure Start should consult with organisations who work within diversity that they presently have links with, to gain advice on how this can best be achieved. Training should also include race equality and terminology training.

The partnership needs to ensure that it is fully compliant with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Outline information about the legislation, that may be helpful, is in Appendix 9. The evaluation has shown that the programme has access to specialist knowledge of this area from at least two of the steering group members. Advice regarding the act and training should be sought from these members.

24. Further training for steering group members (or Programme Management Group members as the change to board status takes place) so they understand their roles and responsibilities.

An awayday was held for Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote steering group in February 2004 to help with the movement to board status. Not all members attended this day, and three steering group members interviewed for this evaluation said that they needed training around Sure Start and their roles and responsibilities. Although this was covered in the awayday, further training will be required for new members and those who did not attend. The training could take the form of written information or updating the people who did not attend the awayday. This would help alleviate problems mentioned by two steering group members that they felt decisions were sometimes made by dominant people. In conjunction with parent pre- and post-meetings and eliminating the use of jargon (see recommendations 18 and 19 above), this would help all steering group members to understand more of what takes place at meetings and so be able to take a more active role in decision-making. The Internet and literature review shows that several other Sure Start programmes have found this approach to be helpful.

Implementation


Implementation of the recommendations in this report will require production of an evaluation action plan, naming the person or group responsible for ensuring that each action is carried out and giving timescales. We suggest a timescale of six months to implement all the recommendations, starting in September to exclude the summer holiday period. The evaluation action plan should also take into account the requirements of the programme’s evaluation strategy.
Appendix 1 – Steering Group Questions

1. Do you understand your role within the partnership, and can you explain this?

2. Do you understand other people’s roles within the partnership, and can you explain a bit about these?

3. When you’re working for the partnership, how do you balance your own priorities and the partnership’s priorities?

4. Are you involved in other partnerships? If yes, which? Does this present any capacity problems?

5. Do you all speak up in meetings? If not, why not?

6. Do you all contribute equally to decision-making? If not, why not?

7. Are the statutory sector involved at the most useful level for the programme? If not, why not?

8. Are the voluntary and community sector fully involved? If not, why not?

9. Are parents and carers fully involved? If not, why not?

10. Are children and young people fully involved? If not, why not?

11. Do you have effective links with other relevant partnerships and agencies in your area? If not, why not?

12. Are all partners willing to learn and change?

13. Do you know, and can you explain, what outcomes you are working towards?

14. Is there anything else you wish to tell us?
Appendix 2 – External Agencies and Groups’ Questions

1. Do you link with Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote? If so, how?

2. Are you involved in other partnerships? If yes, which? Does this present any capacity problems?

3. Can you explain the purpose of Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote?

4. What barriers, if any, do you face in this partnership working? If so, how could this partnership work be made easier?

5. Do you involve parents and carers in your work with Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote? If so, how?

6. Do you have any suggestions on how this Sure Start partnership could be more successful?

7. Is there anything else you wish to tell us?
Appendix 3 – Parents/Carers and Community Members’ Questions

1. Have you heard of Sure Start Lye, Rufford and Wollescote? If no, give leaflet and a short explanation of Sure Start. Then ask questions 9 to 13.

2. Have you had any contact with Sure Start?

3. If yes, what kind of contact?

4. How do you think Sure Start is working so far?

5. How would you like Sure Start to work?

6. Do you think Sure Start involves enough people from all backgrounds and ethnicity?

7. Do you know how Sure Start plan and decide what they are going to do?

8. What do you think is the best way to involve local people in planning and helping to make decisions for Sure Start?

9. Would you like to be involved with Sure Start?

10. If yes, how would you like to be involved?

11. What would you like to get from Sure Start?

12. What is a good way to tell people about Sure Start and what is happening? (e.g. leaflets/posters at schools, home etc)

13. Is there anything else you want to tell us about Sure Start?
Appendix 4 – Steering Group Participants

Andy Gray – DCVS
Claire Roberts – Health Visitor
Dawn Colbourne - Dudley MBC
Derek Pitt - Dudley MBC
Donna Farnell - Early Years and Childcare Team
Esther Holmes - Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
Ghulam Shabar - Social Services Adult Care
Helen Kew - Early Years and Childcare
Jan Kilvert - Hob Green Primary School
Kate Millin – Library
Kathy Glazzard – Community Education Development Unit
Kenneth Rodney - REC
Liz O’Mara – Health Promotions
Mike O’Sullivan – NCH
Motia Yaqub – Parent Representative
Najma Ahmed – Parent Representative
Palvinda Baines – previous seconded Sure Start Programme Director
Rowena Nicholls - Job Centre Plus
Sally Bloomer - Rufford Primary School
Steve Eales - Wollescote Primary School
Sue Preston – Health Trust
Sue Roxburgh – Social Services
Appendix 5 – External Partner Agency Participants

Andy Davies – Orchard Partnership
Belinda Clark – Children’s Information Service
Evelyn Evans – Westhill Clinic
Frances Biseker – Hob Green Church
June Hill - Barnardos
Karen Holdon – Citizens Advice Bureau
Kitty Jenkins – Homestart
Sally Welling – NCH Stourbridge Family Centre
Sylvia Stephenson - Toy Library
Yvonne Hermon - Midwife Smoking Cessation
Appendix 6 – Risk Assessment at Six Months

Risk Assessment at Six Months

Risk Assessment - The Process

The Risk Assessment process covers nine key areas:

Child Protection
Parent & Community Involvement & Participation
Productivity
Finance
Governance & Partnership Working
Personnel Management
Capital
Working with Diversity
Health & Safety

Each key area is broken down into three stages of development: six months, twelve months and eighteen months and programmes are expected to have reached certain set benchmarks at each stage of development.

Programmes are marked as 'met' or 'not met' against each benchmark and are given a risk rating of 'Low Risk', 'Medium Risk' or 'High Risk' dependent on the number of benchmarks met.

Evidence has been gathered via interviews with members of the Programme team, Chair of the Steering Group, Assistant Director, NCH, local families and other stakeholders.

Sure Start Lye, Rufford & Wollescote - Overview

Sure Start Lye, Rufford & Wollescote was approved in April 2003 and for the purpose of this assessment has been deemed as operational for six months. The Programme Director only took up post in November 2003 following a period of acting cover. Great strides have been made to make up for early discontinuity and the Programme is very well on track.

The programme has made very good progress against all areas of the Risk Assessment and as a result has been classed as Low Risk.

Child Protection
The programme has met all the six month benchmarks. A comprehensive Child Protection policy is in place and staff training is in hand.

Parent & Community Involvement & Participation

The programme has met both benchmarks. Parents are involved in working groups as well as on the Steering Group and recruitment to a post of Parent Participation Worker is in hand.

Productivity

The programme has not been able to meet all the benchmarks in the productivity section, and as one of these is a starred benchmark the whole section is treated as unmet. Action points for follow up are:
- Collation and return of information to enable timely completion and submission of the M3 (snapshot of one month's activity each quarter)
- Development of early services in health: the forthcoming discussions with Health for Lyfe and the appointment of a Health Co-ordinator will help the Programme achieve this.

Finance

The Programme has met all Finance benchmarks. There is good support from finance officers at NCH.

Governance & Partnership Working

All benchmarks have been met. There is strong support for the Programme Director from the NCH line manager, other Dudley Programmes and the Steering Group Committee Chair. The phased transition from Steering Group to Management Board has already begun and will involve consultation with current Group members and parents.

Personnel Management

The programme has met all benchmarks. Innovative advertising media are being considered for future recruitment, eg radio. NCH policies and procedures are used, and expanded on where appropriate.

Capital

The Programme has met all benchmarks. Interim accommodation for the team, plus a shop front, have been
organised and services meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Working with Diversity

The programme has met all benchmarks. Outreach workers, including Parent Participation workers will assist the identification of individuals who are hard to reach: parents forums, activities and services will help identify and reshape services to meet the needs of the whole community. The Programme has good links with Language Line and The Orchard Partnership.

Health & Safety

The Programme has met all benchmarks.

Conclusion

The programme has made very good progress against all benchmarks and for the purpose of this Risk Assessment can be classified as Low Risk.
Appendix 7 – Links and contacts identified by steering group members and external partners

- Children’s Information Service
- Westhill Clinic
- Stourbridge Family Centre
- Midwives and health visitors
- Orchard Partnership
- Connexions
- Education Action Zone (EAZ)
- LEA
- Maternity unit partnership with Dudley hospitals and PCTs
- Other Dudley Sure Starts
- Special needs service
- Carers co-ordinator
- Mencap
- Fair Share
- Supporting People
- Community Transport
- Compact
- Voluntary Sector Network
- Regional Action West Midlands
- Global Grants
- Community Empowerment Network
- Lye Area Regeneration Alliance (LARA)
- Lye Amateur Boxing Club
- Tenants and residents associations
- Dudley Community Partnership
- Health through Warmth
- Public Health workshops
- Public Participation
- Clinical governance groups
- Black Country Children’s Rights and Advocacy Project
- GPs
- Stourbridge Schools Network
- Strategic Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP)
- Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Mental Health Board
- Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership
- Lye and Wollescote Community Based Partnership
- Voluntary and private sector organisations (childcare)

N.B. These are the links identified by participants. There may be other links. It does not include participants’ links with whom communication with Sure Start has broken down or never been established.
Appendix 8 – Steering Group Attendance

There were 16 Steering Group meetings between 4th September 2002 and 26th February 2004. A total of 44 people attended the meetings. Thirty-five of these people were professionals, four staff, four parents and one consultant. Three parents attended more than four meetings, one attended only one meeting.

Below is a list of people who attended 4 or more meetings

Andy Gray (11)
Caroline Leahy (9)
Chris Russell (13)
Clare Roberts (8)
Dawn Colbourne (4)
Donna Farnell (4)
Graham Tilby (6) (now left)
Helen Kew (5)
Jan Kilvert (6)
Janice Graham (9)
Kate Millin (9)
Kathy Glazzard (5)
Liz O’Mara (14)
Mike O’Sullivan (8)
Motia Yaqub (12) Parent
Najma Ahmed (8) Parent
Rachel Feavyour (5) (now left)
Rowena Nicholls (4)
Steve Eales (12)
Sue Falshaw (6) Parent
Sue Preston (8)
Su Roxburgh (14)

Keith Alexander (5) Staff
Palvinda Bains (6) Staff
Appendix 9 – Overview of Race Relations Act


The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on grounds of race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origin. The amended Act also imposes general duties on many public authorities to promote racial equality.

It applies to:
- jobs
- training
- housing
- education
- the provision of goods, facilities and services

It is also unlawful for public bodies to discriminate while carrying out any of their functions.

The amended Act imposes a general duty on all major public bodies to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations.

It is not necessary to prove that someone intended to discriminate against you: it is sufficient only to show that the outcome of their action was that you received less favourable treatment.

The Race Relations Act identifies three main types of racial discrimination:
- Direct racial discrimination (including harassment)
- Indirect racial discrimination
- Victimisation

Direct racial discrimination

This occurs when you are able to show that you have been treated less favourably on racial grounds than others in similar circumstances. To prove this, it will help if you can give an example of someone from a different racial group who, in similar circumstances, has been treated more favourably than you.

Racist abuse and harassment are forms of direct discrimination.

If someone has been subjected to harassment on grounds of race or ethnic or national origin, this is regarded as unwanted conduct under the Race Relations Act.

The law considers this to have the effect of violating that person’s dignity, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Indirect racial discrimination
Indirect racial discrimination may fall into one of two categories. The first is on grounds of colour or nationality; the second is based on race, ethnic or national origin.

**On grounds of colour or nationality**

This occurs when you, or people from your racial group, are less likely to be able to comply with a requirement or condition, and that requirement cannot be justified on non-racial grounds.

You will need to show that a considerably smaller proportion of people of your colour or nationality would be able to meet the requirement or condition compared to people not of your colour or nationality. You would also need to show that you have suffered less favourable treatment as a result.

For example, a rule that employees or pupils must not wear headgear could exclude Sikh men and boys who wear a turban, or Jewish men or boys who wear a yarmulka, in accordance with practice within their racial group.

**On grounds of race, ethnic or national origin**

The Race Regulations 2003 introduced a less demanding criterion for indirect racial discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic or national origin.

Discrimination of this type occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied to everyone, but puts people of the same race or national or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage. You will have to demonstrate that you have suffered disadvantage as a result, and that the provision cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.