Sure Start Hemlington and Newham
The Baseline User Satisfaction Survey

1 Introduction

This is the report of a baseline user satisfaction survey carried out by Sure Start Hemlington and Newham in July and August 2003.

Sure Start Hemlington and Newham is one of a number of programmes set up in Middlesborough to work with local families towards the long-term aim of breaking 'the cycle of disadvantage for the current generation of young children'.

Local Sure Start programmes are expected to carry out a baseline user satisfaction survey in the first year of their life. Guidance from the Sure Start Unit issued in May 2003 states that "the purpose of programmes undertaking a user satisfaction survey is two fold:

- To provide data for the Unit to be able to report on the (2001-04) SDA target that 'seventy five per cent of families report personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of services providing family support'

- To provide evidence on satisfaction with services, and improvement in the levels of satisfaction reported, which is fundamental to local evaluation (although not a requirement).

Programmes have been instructed in Annex 5 of the Sixth Wave guidance to undertake a baseline ('start point') survey, ideally in the first three months of operation, and then to carry out the survey again after three years. The baseline provides information against which improvement three years later can be judged.

The baseline survey should provide a clear picture of current issues and strengths in the area, show what parents think of existing services and help to identify what needs to be changed. Guidance from NESS (the National Evaluation of Sure Start) indicates that the survey needs to include both registered and non-registered families in the Sure Start area.

2 Methodology

The questionnaires used were based on a format recommended on the NESS web site. Drafts were discussed with Board members, including parents, and some modifications made as a result. Relevant service providers were also informed and consulted before the survey was conducted.

NESS guidance stressed the need to include the views of parents who were not necessarily involved with Sure Start. For this reason, it was decided to survey a

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1 How was it for you? - a brief guide to conducting user satisfaction surveys for local sure start programmes’ (Mog Ball, July 2002) on www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/documents/GuidanceReports/GuidanceUserSatisfactionSurveys.pdf
random sample of parents in the community, rather than accessing parents through existing activities. Sure Start staff approached parents in shopping centres and local facilities, and invited them to help with the survey. Assistance was given if required. A total of 52 questionnaires were completed.

The survey was carried out prior to the appointment of the programme’s independent evaluators, Acton Shapiro. However, they were asked to assist in the analysis and presentation of the data. From the frequency tables that had been prepared, aggregated data was entered on a spreadsheet, and graphs and accompanying text produced.

3 Findings

3.1 Details of the Respondents

The parents

Questions 1 and 2, and 21 to 28 were designed to elicit personal details about the respondents and their families. The responses showed that:

- **Location:** 47 of the respondents had a TS8 postcode and one lived in TS9 (4 did not respond).

- **Marital status:** 20 were single, and another was divorced or separated. 14 were living with a partner and another 14 were married (3 did not respond). Figure 1 shows the marital status of the 52 respondents.

- **Living situation:** 25 respondents were living with their partner or spouse, and 3 with their parents (24 did not respond).
- **Employment status:** Only one respondent worked full time, whilst 19 partners did. The largest groups of respondents were either seeking work (though not registered) (19) or employed part time (14). Figure 2 shows the employment status of both the respondents and their partners.

Figure 2 Employment status of respondents and partners

- **Gender:** In the majority of cases (40), the main carer of the child(ren) was female; 6 were male (6 did not respond).

- **Age:** The largest group (23) were those aged 25 to 34. 15 were between 16 and 24, and 8 were aged 35 to 44. Only 1 respondent was over 44 (5 did not respond). Figure 3 shows the age profile of the respondents.

Figure 3. Age profile of the respondents
• **Ethnic origin:** The options given were: White, Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese. 46 respondents selected ‘White’, one ‘Black Other’, and 3 selected other than the options available (2 did not respond).

• **Pregnancy:** 4 respondents were expecting a child within the next 6 months (43 were not, and 5 did not respond).

**The children**

• **Age:** 59 of the 97 children of the respondents were under 4 years old (one did not respond). Age distribution is shown in Figure 4.

*Figure 4. Age distribution of children*
- **Families with children under four:** 5 of the families completing the questionnaire did not have any children under 4; 36 families had one child under 4 (18 of these were single child families); and a further 11 had 2 children under 4. Figure 5 shows the number of children in each of the families.

*Figure 5. Number of children in families*
3.2 Quality of Life for Children

The respondents were asked to identify, from a list of options, two or three areas or services that needed improving to enhance the quality of life for their children. Figure 6 shows that the most frequently selected issue was ‘improved crime/safety’, selected by over half (30), followed at some distance by a cluster of other issues i.e. ‘more opportunities to play outside’ (22), ‘improved transport’ (21), ‘more opportunities to play with other children’ (20) and ‘more opportunities for learning’ (20).

Figure 6. Things that need improving to improve the quality of life for their children
### 3.3 Health Services

Question 4 asked respondents to identify those health services they had used in the last 12 months, and to state which they would like to use more in the future. Figure 7 shows that the most commonly used services were the basic primary care services i.e. Doctor/GP (48), Dentist (40), and Community Nurse/Health Visitor (35).

**Figure 7. Use of Health Services**

There were fewer responses to the question about future use of services. These responses are also shown in Figure 7, and show that the service that the most respondents ‘would like to use in the future’ was ‘Advice on preventing accidents in the home’.
Figure 8 shows the rate of satisfaction with the location of health services (calculated by combining figures for ‘very satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’). All the services were rated above 70%, with the exception of ‘Advice/support on alcohol/drug addiction’ (56%).

Figure 8. Satisfaction with the location of services

Respondents were asked where they would like to see health services developed. Figure 9 shows their responses. A half (26) wanted to see developments at schools, and 23 wanted to see them at parent and toddler groups.
3.4 Community Services

Respondents were asked how often they used a range of listed local services and how they rated them. Figure 10 shows that the vast majority rated these services either ‘good’ or ‘satisfactory’, with only 5 ‘unsatisfactory’ ratings out of a total of 175.
Table 1 shows the number of visits to local services made by respondents in the last 12 months. Of the nine services, five had been visited by more than half of the parents. However, few respondents had visited any service more that a handful of times in a year, and very few were really regular visitors i.e. visiting ten or more times in a year.

### Table 1

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<th>2 visits</th>
<th>3 visits</th>
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</table>
Ease of access to community facilities

Respondents were asked how easy they found it to visit a number of named community facilities. The majority seemed to find it easy to visit most facilities, varying from 36 for the Local Community Centre up to 50 for the Parkway Centre. Figure 11 shows that most of the services were found to be ‘very easy’ or ‘fairly easy’ to visit. However, nearly half of those who commented (17) found it difficult to visit Langton Square and over half (20) found it difficult to visit Lingfield Ash.

Figure 11  How easy was it for respondents to visit services

3.5 Childcare, Play and Learning

Respondents were asked to say which of a list of facilities they had used in the last 12 months and whether they would like to use them more often. Figure 12 shows that the most used facilities were parks and play areas (37), a relative (35) and parent and toddler groups (31).

Parks and play areas were also the facilities respondents would most like to use more often, followed by parent and toddler groups and sports/leisure centre facilities.
The respondents were also asked what they thought was a reasonable cost for one hour of childcare. Figure 13 illustrates their responses.

Figure 13. Reasonable cost for one hour of childcare
Of the 34 who entered a cost, a small majority (18) thought £2 or £2.50 was reasonable, with a further 14 suggesting more than £2.50.

When asked where they would like to use childcare, play and learning facilities, the majority cited ‘Recreation/leisure facilities’ (39) and ‘Community Centres’ (34), as shown in Figure 14.

*Figure 14. Where parents would like to use childcare, play and learning facilities*

The greatest demand for childcare facilities was for a period of 3-4 hours (14). However, 20 parents either would not like childcare, or did not know. Figure 15 shows the pattern of demand for childcare facilities.

*Figure 15. Pattern of demand for childcare facilities*
They also said that the priority time for improving the provision of childcare was during the school holidays (22 respondents) as illustrated by Figure 16.

**Figure 16. Priority times for improvement of provision of childcare**

3.6 **Support for Parents**

Question 14 asked respondents to identify from a list of support services those that they had used in the last 12 months, and which they would like to use. Figure 17 shows that the drop-in had been the most heavily used service, with 22 reporting they had used this service. Only 4 parents had used the Getting Back to Work service, although this was the service that respondents said they would most like to use (in the future).

**Figure 17 Services used in the last 12 months**
3.7 Knowledge of Services

Figure 18 shows that knowledge about the facilities and services for children under 4 was not very high. Over half the parents (27) said that they felt that they knew ‘not very much’ or ‘nothing at all’ about the facilities and services.
3.8 Sure Start Activities

The respondents were asked which of a list of venues they would attend for Sure Start activities. Figure 19 shows that there were two particular favourites, with three quarters or more favouring Hemlington Recreation Centre and the Rainbow Centre. Over half would attend Hemlington Library, Hemlington Initiative Centre, St John of God, Parkway Centre, Viewley Centre shops and the NCH Family Centre.

Three of the schools on the list (St Gerard’s School, Sunnyside School and Rosewood School) were the venues least favoured by the respondents.

Figure 19. Venues which respondents would attend for Sure Start activities
Question 17 asked respondents about their interest in services provided by Sure Start. Figure 20 shows the responses. Play and learning activities were clearly the services attracting the most interest (39). Over a half were interested in library events, such as storytelling.

*Figure 20 Interest in services from Sure Start*

Respondents were asked how they would like to hear about Sure Start and other family activities. Figure 21 shows that, in general, they favoured direct methods such as door-to-door leafleting, posters and adverts in the local paper. Information through professionals was not highly favoured.

*Figure 21 How respondents would like to hear about Sure Start and other family activities*
When asked how well they knew the local Sure Start programme, just over half (27) said they knew it ‘very well’ or ‘a fair amount’. Only 3 had never heard of it, as shown in Figure 22.

**Figure 22  Knowledge of the Sure Start programme**

Question 20 asked respondents how they might like to be involved (in the Sure Start programme). Only ten said they did not want to be involved in any of the ways suggested. The most popular potential areas of involvement were ‘being on a panel’ (20), ‘education/training’ (16), and ‘finding views and needs’, ‘making decisions about Sure Start money’ and ‘being a member of the Sure Start Board’ (15 each). Figure 23 illustrates the results.

**Figure 23  How did respondents want to be involved (in Sure Start services)**
4. Conclusions

This survey represents the views of 52 parents from the Sure Start area. Because this number is relatively small, caution must be taken in interpreting the data received. However, the survey does highlight areas and issues which may merit further investigation. The survey suggests that:

- The quality-of-life issues which are considered to most need improvement are crime and safety; outside play opportunities; transport; play with other children; and opportunities for learning.
- There is interest in greater access to advice on accident prevention.
- There is generally high satisfaction with the location of health services, with the exception of advice/support on drugs and alcohol. Parents would like to see more health advice/services sited in schools and parent-and-toddler groups.
- Parents are generally satisfied with their local community centres and libraries, though few seem to visit any of these on a very regular basis. Most are perceived as easily accessible, with the exception of Langdon Square and Lingfield Ash.
- With regard to childcare, play and learning, the most used facilities are parks and play areas; relatives; and parent-and-toddler groups.
- The majority of respondents suggest £2 to £2.50 as a reasonable charge for an hour’s childcare.
- Knowledge among parents about services for families with young children is low.
- There is a lot of interest in Sure Start providing play and learning activities, and library-based events. Schools are not particularly favoured as the venue for Sure Start activities.
- Respondents favour direct methods for publicising events.
- Many parents express interest in being actively involved in Sure Start in a range of ways.