



## Play & Stay Review

April / May 2004

## Service Review

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### Document control and record of amendments

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# 1. Overview

## 1.1 Purpose of this document

Each Sure Start service will be subject to six monthly reviews in their first year of operation and twelve monthly reviews thereafter. The purpose of these reviews will be to ascertain the effectiveness of the activity in regard to the following criteria:

- Reach – number of children and families using the service
- Parent / Carer views and comments
- Staff views and comments
- Cost Effectiveness

## 1.2 Introduction

Play & Stay sessions were originally set up at the start of 2003 and give parents or carers the opportunity to take their children to either Burnt Tree Primary School (Thursday afternoon) or St Michaels Church Hall (Thursday morning).

There is no charge for this service and it gives carers the chance to meet other local parents in a safe environment. A range of different activities are set up by Sure Start staff which includes art activities, sing-a-long sessions and a selection of toys that can be played with throughout the session. It is hoped that children attending these sessions will learn new skills and be able to increase their interaction and communication skills with others.

The mobile 'Toy Library' also visits some of the sessions and on an ad hoc basis SAMPAD attend to cover other arts and crafts activities.

This report will base its findings on information obtained via a questionnaire discussed with carers week commencing 26 April 2004.

## 1.3 Key deliverables and time scales

Date	Deliverable
26 April 2004	Produce questionnaire
29 April 2004	Conduct interviews with carers
30 April 2004	Analyse results and produce first draft
07 May 2004	Produce final copy for distribution

## **2. Assumptions and Constraints**

### **2.1 Assumptions**

- All questionnaires will be conducted by interviewing carers at a Play & Stay session
- Questionnaires will be returned to Chris Jones for review and analysis

### **2.2 Constraints**

- Play & Stay sessions are run on Thursdays only, therefore, completion timeframe is limited

### **2.3 Dependencies**

- Carers are prepared to complete the Questionnaires

## 3. Findings & Recommendations

### 3.1 Service Costs

Within the period 2003 to 2004, Sure Start has invested in the services provided at these venues and a summary for each is shown below:

#### Burnt Tree Primary

Sure Start has purchased equipment for this venue which includes toys to the value of £1500.00, the purchase of a shed for storage of these toys and also more recently, fitness equipment for the new up and coming 'Tumble Tots' sessions.

#### St Michaels

At this venue, Sure Start have invested £11,000.00 for a new wooden floor in the Main Hall, as this is one venue where a number of our sessions are run from i.e. Tipton Toddlers, Post Natal Support groups and ad-hoc events throughout the year. We also have a large number of soft play items and other various toys for use within the Hall.

\* Please note that at both events there is also an on cost for Sure Start employee's who supervise such events.

### 3.2 Findings from Questionnaires

#### 3.2.1 General Feedback

30% of families interviewed were not aware or had very little knowledge of the aims of Sure Start or how it is funded as an organisation. From a further analysis, these families were those who have only attended a few sessions over the last couple of months. 35% had a clear understanding of our goals and what we are aiming to achieve within the local area and the remaining 35% were only aware of the services we run and not how we are established or our background history.

Comments in relation to the staff that run the sessions were all positive, with most carers all agreeing that they are helpful, friendly, knowledgeable (especially with advice on parenting and learning), patient and always on hand to answer queries or assist with any problems that may arise. The carers feel confident to ask questions and feel that the staff encourage their children to learn new skills, promote self confidence and increase personal skills and independence.

As carers, these sessions allow them to leave the home environment and attend a local group activity where they can meet other parents all with children who are under the age of four.

Expectations of the sessions are that their children will make new friendships before they reach nursery / school age and to learn how to play co-operatively alongside peers. This includes being able to share, increase basic language and increase confidence before they are required to attend Nursery sessions.

50% of the sample base either did not know what other sessions we run, or would like more information, the other 50% were able to list the other sessions favourably.

#### 3.2.2 St Michaels (7 questionnaires completed)

Comments in relation to the venue are very positive. 100% of the sample agree that the it is an ideal local venue with appropriate sized play space with good parking. It was also commented

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that it is safe, secure, clean and tidy. 20% also commented that the kitchen facilities were an advantage and the children enjoy the refreshments provided.

60% of those interviewed would not change any aspect of the session, however, comments were made to suggest that more books should be made available, a new outdoor play area could be considered or extra play equipment such as sand, water, paint and sticking and gluing.

Whilst considering what extra activities could be made available to the carers, suggestions made included cooking and needlework.

All but one carer agreed that the session times were good and a suggestion was made asking if the two play and stay sessions could be made available on different days in the week.

100% of the sample would recommend this session and comments were made that they have already recommended it to other people within the community.

60% of those interviewed found out about this session by word of mouth, 30% from other sessions we run and the remaining 10% from the Sure Start leaflet.

2 carers mentioned within the questionnaire that they would like to get more involved in the activities we run.

On the final question relating to the development of the child, carers found this difficult to fill in, however, on those successfully completed, progress and improvement was seen on the development, interaction and listening sections.

### **3.2.3 Burnt Tree Nursery (5 questionnaires completed)**

Feedback on this venue is complementary, with carers stating that it is comfortable for their children. Even though being relatively small, it gave carers a more intimate space to meet other parents. As the area is also primarily a Nursery School, it was felt that there are many different activities for the children to be entertained by and all areas of play were satisfactory.

One person requested changes to the session and a request has been made for external events on an ad-hoc basis when there is good weather. One recommendation was for events such as Nature Walks in the local vicinity.

Two comments were made by the carers to request cookery lessons, one requested some sort of training course and one comment related to having more group activities within the 'Play & Stay' sessions. A further comment was to get external organisations into the session e.g. Weight Watchers.

60% of the carers at this venue stated that the session time was inconvenient for them and they hated having to make time for their children's sake.

All questionnaires completed were complementary of the service that is run for them and would all recommend this session to other carers who had not attended a session before. They originally found out about this session from posters around this school and from Tividale School.

3 out of the 5 carers who completed this questionnaire are interested in becoming involved in other activities we run.

Again, the final section relating to their child's development was difficult for them to complete, however, from the sample that was completed, improvement was seen in all areas, especially the responding and physical sections.

### 3.3 Findings from feedback from Staff

General feelings from the staff are that the sessions run with ease, however, some time and consideration should be spent to move the event forward. Some forward planning is now due to plan further events and activities so the children do not become complacent and bored. A vast improvement has been seen on the children's development across all boundaries. A prime example is seen with two of the children who are now sharing and participating more in the events on offer. The carer of these children is also now more participative and can clearly see the advantage and benefits of the session.

In order to move the session forward, more support is required at the event so that the main leaders of the group can sit with the attendees and get a clearer picture of the specific needs of each child. Hopefully this report will conclude some of these issues.

### 3.4 Reach

During research carried out in April 2004, the current take up of this weekly service at Burnt Tree Primary is usually around 8 carers plus children and 17 carers plus children at the St Michaels venue.

Over the period, new people are seen quite regularly at each of the venues, however, taking data from the event held on the 22 April 2004, 50% of children were of the White British ethnicity, 40% Indian and 10% Caribbean, therefore, we have no recorded children coming from any of the other ethnic minority backgrounds.

### 4. Recommendations

While the 'Play & Stay' service is highly regarded by carers and staff members, the number of Sure Start families using the service should be increased. This can be completed by identifying parents registered with Sure Start who have not considered using our services. A simple mail merge from the EStart database can be produced of those families who we are failing to reach and a promotional leaflet can be forwarded to them.

There are currently also some minor discrepancies with the services provided at each of the venues and the main areas are listed below:

Burnt Tree	St Michaels
Free Tea, Coffee and biscuits for the parents	Tea, Coffee, Toast at a cost of 50p
Resources supplied by Burnt Tree	Resources supplied by Sure Start
School supply a free Nursery Nurse for assistance in arranging / attending each event	No further support given

Therefore, I recommend that a review to standardise the service should be made to ensure that carers at each of the sessions receive a common service throughout.

Limited numbers of fathers are seen in the 'Play & Stay' sessions and a more proactive approach should be made to bring fathers into these sessions. Appreciation of fathers working hours should be made and may ease if a Fathers Worker is employed directly by Sure Start to organise activity outside normal working hours.

A request was made by one carer for an increase in their child's skills development, it was suggested that this could be completed by further work with numbers and words by using magnetic boards or flash cards. On clear weather days, a consideration should be made to arrange outdoor activities with the possibility of arranging local walks or visits to local attractions. Another area for consideration would be to increase children's development in computer skills and a basic computer and computer based training package could be purchased by Sure Start.

Whilst able to utilise the facilities within each venue, extra activities should be considered for the carers, those mentioned include cooking and the possible attendance of external organisations / people such as Weight Watchers, Health Visitors and Psychologists.

Five people (33%) mentioned that the session times were inconvenient for them, therefore, a further survey should be conducted to obtain specific times and dates that would be more beneficial to them and their children.

50% of those interviewed were unaware of what other activities we run as an organisation, therefore, a review of what promotional information we hold and where it is displayed should be made. I have ensured that information has been forwarded to those people stating they require more details.

Overall, 5 people mentioned that they would like to get involved in events arranged by Sure Start. These carers should be contacted to see what type of work they are interested in.

For the numbers of carers and children we are reaching each week, I conclude that the service we are providing has a low cost to Sure Start and needs very little support from staff members.

## 5. Key Actions Summary

- Review Times & Days of Play and Stays with local parents. With special consideration for working parents and fathers
- Ensure all local parents have access to up to date details on Sure Start activities
- Explore further opportunities to develop additional activity – cookery, outdoor play, Weight Watchers Group etc
- Offer parents more information and guidance in identifying and supporting their children's key developmental aims
- Diversify activity in the sessions through planned activity or through guest speakers.

## 6. Supporting Documentation

The following is a list of key supporting documents that shall be referenced / used during the project:

	<b>Title of Document</b>
1	Questionnaire
2	Sure Start Newsletter
3	Updated weekly events