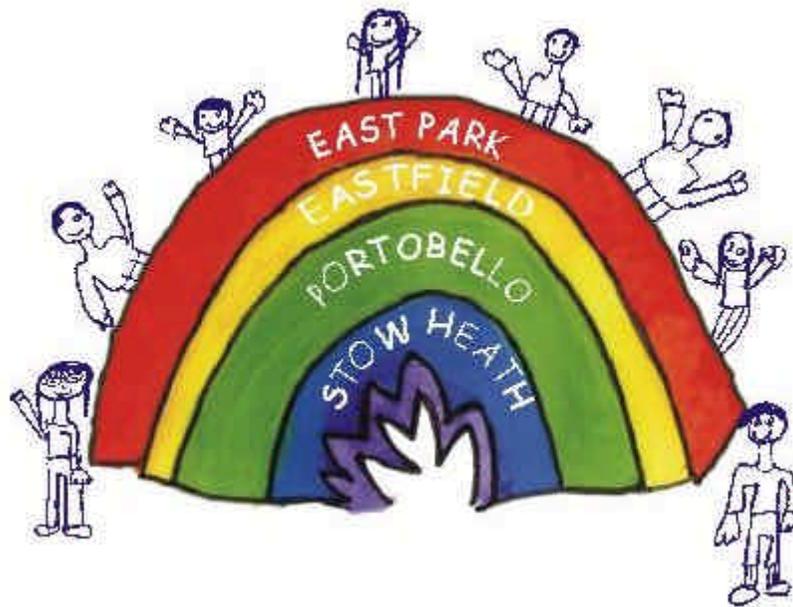


# Parent & Carer Service User Survey Findings



**SureStart**  
Wolverhampton East

Draft 2004

## Parent and Carer Service User Survey – Summary of Findings

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### A. The people who took part in the survey.

There are 839 families with children under 5 in the Sure Start Wolverhampton East area. To comply with data protection regulations, Partners in Change were not allowed access to the names and addresses of these families without their consent. Wolverhampton City Primary Care Trust wrote to 720 families, randomly selected, asking them to give their consent to taking part in the survey. 94 people responded. After three visits to each address, at different times and on different days, 64 interviews were successfully carried out.

**Geographical spread:** Of those interviewed, 12.5% live in East Park; 46.8% live in Eastfield; 12.5% in Stow Heath and 28.2% in Portobello.

**Fathers:** Only 7 fathers were interviewed and 6 of these were interviewed on a Saturday or Sunday.

**Ethnicity:** In terms of ethnic diversity, our sample included higher percentages of Asian and Black people than in the population of the Sure Start Wolverhampton East area as a whole. The ethnic profile was (2001 Census in brackets): 71% (83%) White; 14% (8%) Asian; 8% (6%) Black. None of the respondents who identified as Asian or Black conveyed to us that their ethnicity was a factor in how they were treated by service providers or that access to services was more difficult for them. It is possible, however, that a number of Black and Minority Ethnic parents and carers were not in a position to respond to the original request to take part in the survey – a home visit might have been unacceptable, for example. Further attempts to reach a greater number of Black and Minority Ethnic parents and carers should be made.

**Age:** 41% of those interviewed were aged 31-35. A further 28% were aged between 26 and 30. Only 6 of those interviewed were under 20. Because the parents and carers we interviewed had to actively get back in touch with us to give their consent before we could interview them, we were not surprised that so many respondents were aged over 30. We would advise that alternative methods of reaching young parents and carers should be tried.

**Number of children:** 84% of those interviewed had only one child aged under 5. Of these, 61% had older brothers and sisters – 52% of these were aged 5-10 and 48% were aged 11-16+. We did not ask if the older brothers and sisters had the same father as this would have been too intrusive. From what we were told by respondents, however, about 12 families were made up of children with different fathers.

## What parents and carers told us

Overall, levels of satisfaction with services are very high. Service providers should not feel complacent about this, however. Many parents and carers were reluctant to criticise services – especially health related services. Also, many parents and carers found it difficult to suggest how things could be improved. This was not necessarily because they thought services were good. It was more to do with not knowing what other choices they had or what the alternatives could be.

### B. Childcare, Early Learning and Play

**Early learning and play:** About half of all under 5s of the parents and carers interviewed had attended one or more of a Baby Group (50%), Carer and Toddler Group (20%), Play Group (12%), Nursery (44%) or Crèche (20%). For those who had not attended any of these, parents said that lack of information and affordability were the main reasons for not attending. Some did admit that they lacked confidence and felt they might be judged a bad parent if their child did not ‘behave’.

**Levels of satisfaction:** with early learning and play opportunities are high. Parents and carers think they are a good way for children to mix and develop social skills, and they feel the settings they have used are well run and resourced. We picked up very few negative comments. Clearly there is considerable good practice that can be built on in order to attract the remaining 50% of under 5s to early learning and play opportunities.

**Informal childcare:** 34% of parents used informal childcare provided by their own grandparents, parents and other family members. This was ‘regular’ use in 59% of cases, mostly to support working parents. Evidence from some Sure Start local programmes (e.g. Sure Start Tilbury), shows that grandparents looking after very young children can often feel isolated and unsupported. This could be a group that Sure Start Wolverhampton East would wish to ‘target’. Only 2 parents interviewed had used a registered childminder.

**Opportunities for play and learning:** 41% of those interviewed felt that there were not enough opportunities for play and learning in the Sure Start area.

**Outdoor play:** Outdoor play areas were very heavily criticised by parents and carers as being unsafe, dirty and unsuitable for the under fives. 83% said there were not enough good quality play areas for the under 5s.

**Use of library:** 59% of all parents and carers use their local library (mostly Eastfield). Of these, 24% stated that they use the library once a week.

### C. Health

**GP services:** All those interviewed, and their children, were registered with a GP. 24 GP practices from across Wolverhampton were named. Generally, levels of satisfaction with GPs were high (83% satisfied or very satisfied). Many parents and carers told us that they felt waiting times were too long, consultation times too short and that some surgeries were too cramped and not at all 'child friendly', but they were reluctant to record dissatisfaction. 23% had visited their GP between 5-10 times over the past year. A similar percentage had visited their GP with their child for things other than vaccinations.

**Dental services:** 86% of adults interviewed were registered with a dentist (23 different dental practices mentioned), but only 41% of their children aged under 5 were registered. 4 parents said they were having difficulty finding a dentist. The most common reason for children not being registered is that the children were too young. This would seem to indicate that there is a need to convey a stronger message about dental hygiene and the importance of seeing a dentist regularly from an early age. 97% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their dentist.

**A&E:** 52% of children under 5 had attended Accident and Emergency, half of these once only. 67% of parents and carers who had attended A&E with their child were either satisfied or very satisfied with the treatment they received but A&E received strong criticism for the long waiting times. Concern was also expressed about the untidy condition of A&E and the lack of facilities for families with young children.

**Out of hours services:** The majority of parents and carers interviewed knew that Doctors on Call provide the out of hours service for Wolverhampton and, depending on the seriousness of their child's condition, 52% would call them first. A surprisingly high number (31%) would contact NHS Direct. Only 6% would go directly to A&E. This seems to indicate that A&E is not being used by parents as a substitute for GP services out of hours.

**Ante natal services:** Only 3 parents interviewed had attended specific ante natal classes (1x Parentcraft; 2 Aqua natal). GP clinics were by far the greatest source of advice and support ante natally. 87% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the ante natal advice and services they received. Concerns were expressed by some over long waiting times, crowded clinics and lack of privacy but there was a great reluctance to express this as dissatisfaction.

**Baby clinics:** were very highly praised, despite comments about long waiting times and over crowding. 92% said they were satisfied or very satisfied. Generally people feel that baby clinics offer good, practical advice in a helpful way.

**Hospital services:** 32% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied mostly because they were unhappy with maternity services at New Cross hospital. There is no consistent pattern to the dissatisfaction, although long waiting times feature in 12 responses.

**Health Visitor services:** Many respondents named their health visitor and were full of praise for their caring attitudes and helpfulness. 45% were very satisfied with the health visitor service and 47% were satisfied. Of the 8% who expressed dissatisfaction, most said they never saw their health visitor (ie: did not attend clinics or respond to requests to attend). This would indicate that, at a conservative estimate, as many as 50-60 families in the Sure Start Wolverhampton East area may never have contact with a health visitor after the new born visits.

**Smoking:** About 25 of those interviewed smoked before becoming pregnant. Almost all (92%) were smoking again after the birth of their baby.

#### **D. Advice and Support for Parents and Young Children**

**Concerns:** There are detailed responses to questions about talking and listening, behaviour, child's weight, child's eating and the way the child plays with others. Parents were most commonly concerned about their child's behaviour (18%) and what they eat (28%). Most found the advice useful (73% and 55% of those who were concerned) but that still leaves 27% and 45% with concerns about behaviour and eating and probably in need of sustained support to tackle these issues.

**Feeling 'down':** 45% reported feeling 'down' after having their baby. 41% turned to family and friends for support; 28% specifically mentioned their husband or partner. 19% had been to their GP and 9% had talked to their health visitor. This would indicate that a higher percentage than recorded in the Sure Start Wolverhampton East baseline data feel the need to seek expert advice. Many respondents said that they thought it was 'natural' to feel a bit down after the birth of a baby and that you just 'got over it'.

**Feeding:** There was a very strong awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding for baby and mother, although only 16% had fed their baby only on breast milk. 27% had used a combination of breast and bottle. 57% had been fed on formula milk. A number of those interviewed explained the difficulties they had encountered in the very early stages of breastfeeding and that they had worried about their baby going hungry. Hospital midwives had offered a bottle feed in some cases.

**Money and benefits advice:** 81% had received no advice about money of benefit matters. For those who had, there was no consistent source of advice and none were local to the Sure Start Wolverhampton East area.

### **E. Opportunities for Training and Employment**

45% of parents interviewed are in employment (24% full time and 76% part time). 90% are happy in their job and mostly give reasons to do with social interaction, flexibility and money for being happy. Of the 55% who are not employed, only 26% had received advice about getting a job, with Job Centre plus being the main source of information. Many of those not currently in paid employment suggested that they wanted to stay at home with their child until they reached full time education.

The parents we interviewed were much better qualified than the population as a whole in the Sure Start Wolverhampton East area. 48% said they had GCSE or equivalent compared to about 30% in the area as a whole.

82% said they wanted to improve their qualifications. Significant barriers to improving their qualifications were: lack of affordable childcare (29%); lack of suitable childcare (28%); don't know what is available (12%); lack of transport (12%).

### **F. Knowledge of Sure Start**

75% of those interviewed had heard of Sure Start prior to receiving the invitation to take part in the survey. This figure is likely to be higher than in the population of families of under 5s as a whole, although it may be a reflection of the work that has been put into publicising Sure Start activities to families.