



Evaluation of Library Services 2003/2004

A Report by Amanda Fisher & Andy Hart

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. Context
4. Why early language is so important
5. Why books are so important for babies and young children
6. Groups and activities provided by Library Services
7. Questionnaire results and analysis
8. Observations and Conclusions
9. Recommendations

1. Introduction

1.1 This report investigates the service provided for Sure Start Central by Southampton City Council (SCC) Library Services. The report will look at the provision of library services in the Sure Start Central area and how they perform in terms of

- ❑ The service they are contracted to provide
- ❑ How they work strategically and in partnership with other Sure Start service providers and partner agencies
- ❑ How they perform against the national and local targets, objectives and milestones
- ❑ How local parents and families feel about the service provided and how they feed into and influence service provision.

The Sure Start Initiative

1.2 The aim of Sure Start is

'To work with parents-to-be, parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children - particularly those who are disadvantaged so that they can flourish at home and when they get to school, and thereby break the cycle of disadvantage for the current generation of young children'.

This aim is to be delivered by achieving all four Sure Start objectives:

- Improving social and emotional development
- Improving health
- Improving children's ability to learn
- Strengthening families and communities

1.3 The third objective, 'improving children's ability to learn' aims to 'encourage high quality environments and childcare that promote early

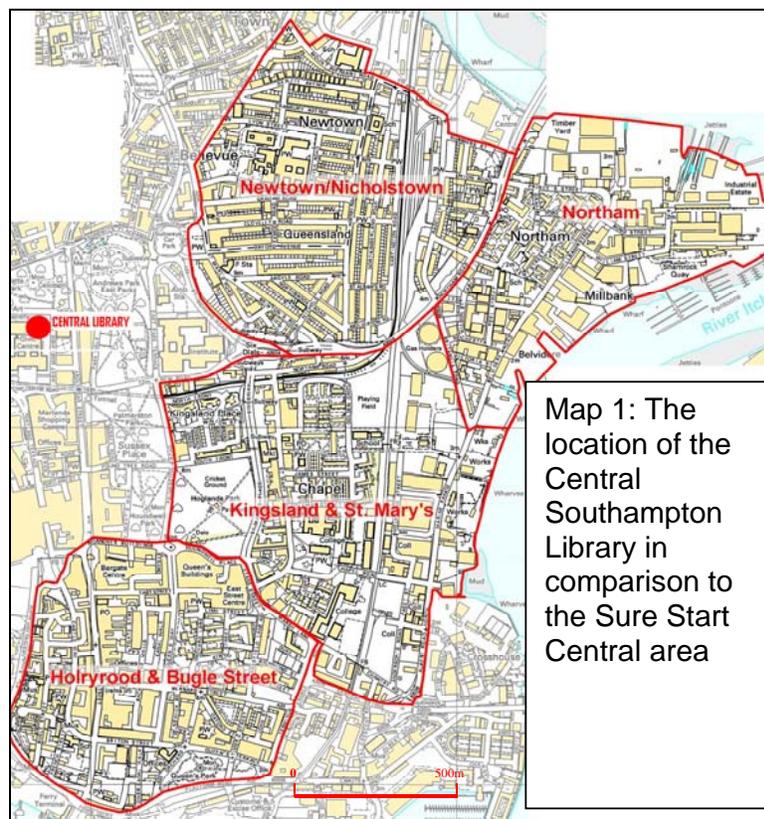
learning, provide stimulating and enjoyable play, improve language skills and ensure early identification and support of children with special needs'. The overall target for this objective is for programmes to 'achieve by 2005-06 an increase in the proportion of children having normal levels of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation Stage and an increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at age 2 years.' The provision of library services within Sure Start programme areas has a clear role to play in the achievement of this target and each Sure Start programme must seek to achieve the delivery target of 'increased use of libraries by families with young children in Sure Start areas'.

Sure Start Central

- 1.4 Sure Start Central, a wave 4 programme, received approval in December 2001. It covers significant parts of the inner city of Southampton with a total population of 10853 and an estimated 800 children under 4. The area is rich in its diversity of communities with an ethnic minority population of approximately 48%, and an estimated 25 community languages spoken in the locality, including Arabic, Kurdish, Dari, Farsi, Pushto, Urdu, Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Cantonese, Mandarin, Italian, Portuguese, French, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, Polish, Somali, Swahili, Shona and some other African and traveller languages. The area has a significant transient population and is home to many of the city's Asylum Seekers.
- 1.5 The programme is managed by Southampton City Council's Community Cohesion Division and covers the four distinct neighbourhoods of Newtown/Nicholstown, Holyrood, Northam and Golden Grove/Kingsland. In response to the different needs of communities in these neighbourhoods a series of satellite venues are being developed. The programme has a small directly employed team of six and a large 'virtual

team' made up of statutory and voluntary sector providers delivering services through service level agreements. Sure Start Central has a revenue budget of £675,000 in year 2003-2004 and will deliver a capital strategy to the value of £1,000,000.

1.6 Although there is not a library in the Sure Start Central area the main Southampton Library is just a short walk from parts of the area. Map 1 shows the four distinct areas that comprise Sure Start Central and the relative position of the Library. For 25 years, the Library has also provided an informal library service for the Central area through the Bookbus. This is a custom built vehicle that provides a five-day a week service, including evenings and Saturday mornings. It stops on the street for family use and also visits Schools and Pre-Schools. It has a large stock of children's books and books in community languages for loan, and also provides other children's activities. It was one of the first community based library services in the country. The Bookbus is well known and appreciated by the local community.



1.7 As with all Sure Start programmes the ethos is that Sure Start Central is a 'Parent Driven' service. Parents are involved in the management, planning and service delivery of the programme. They are well represented on the programme Management Board and the Sure Ideas Group (a parent group), which feeds into the Management Board.

The Evaluation Process

1.8 The Sure Start Unit requires each Sure Start programme to regularly evaluate the impact of Sure Start on the local community. The National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) guidance recommends that each area-based Sure Start programme regularly evaluate their services. The Management Board for each programme has the responsibility for identifying the area they feel will be of most use for the programme to evaluate. For more information visit the NESS web site at www.ness.bbk.ac.uk. In Southampton an Evaluation Strategy has been produced for Sure Start citywide.¹

¹ This was agreed and approved by the Sure Start Monitoring and Evaluation Group and the Sure Start Reference Group (the strategic body with an overview of all the Sure Start programmes within the city). The strategy outlines the differing levels of evaluation to be undertaken throughout the city and by whom (see Appendix 3).

2. Methodology

2.1 The evaluation Action Plan (see Appendix 3) established the framework for the study. The plan identified key staff responsible for leading on elements of the evaluation and for providing support to those with lead responsibility. Unfortunately due to time restraints and staffing changes the action plan could not be followed and as a result some of the planned evaluation could not be completed.

Research Methods

2.2 The evaluation Action Plan had a number of components:

- ❑ Quantitative data analysis – parental questionnaire survey
- ❑ Consideration of the Service Level Agreement between Sure Start and SCC Library Services

2.3 A baseline was established by accessing the Sure Start Central database of registered families and records of those attending groups and services relating to Library Services between April 2003 and March 2004.

2.4 A questionnaire was considered the most appropriate method of gaining the necessary quantitative data. The format of the questionnaire was designed and agreed by a working group before being piloted with a group of 10 local parents. A copy of the Questionnaire can be found in appendix 2.

2.5 It was agreed that the questionnaire should be conducted face to face as the broad ethnic make up of the area does not easily lend itself to postal questionnaires. It was felt that this combined with recognised low levels of literacy meant that postal questionnaires would be less likely to ascertain the views of those from more hard to reach groups or more isolated members of the community.

2.6 The interviews were administered in Sure Start groups, services and activities by Community Development Workers and other members of the Sure Start Central team but not those delivering Sure Start Library services or activities. Independent researchers from Southampton City Council also interviewed families attending Library services and activities.

3. Context

- 3.1 Sure Start Central have a contract with SCC to provide the equivalent of 27 hours of Library Link Worker time per week to deliver Library groups, services and activities within the Sure Start Central area. Sure Start Unit guidance stipulates that Sure Start funding must only be used to provide services over and above those normally provided within the locality.
- 3.2 The 27 hours a week are provided by two SCC Library Link Workers, Emma Childe and Gwenda Baker, who work closely with other members of the Sure Start Central team and who have full use of office facilities at the Sure Start Central office base including the use of a desk, computer and telephone. Sure Start Central also pay for and provide all venue requirements for activities relating to the provision of Sure Start Library services and all publicity material required.
- 3.3 SCC Library Services division, part of the lifelong Learning & Leisure Directorate, provide the employment and line management for both workers. Regular three monthly meetings are held with the Sure Start Central Programme Manager and the Principal Children's Librarian to review the service.
- 3.4 The work of the Library Link Workers is expected to contribute to the delivery of the following National Sure Start targets
 - ❑ S3 – Parenting support and information available for all parents in Sure Start areas.
 - ❑ S7 – All children aged 0-3 in Sure Start areas to have access to good quality play and learning opportunities, helping progress towards early learning goals when they get to school.
 - ❑ S8 – Increased use of libraries by families with young children in Sure Start areas.

- ❑ S9 – Seventy five per cent of families reporting personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of services providing family support.
- ❑ P3 - Achieve by 2005-06 an increase in the proportion of children having normal levels of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation Stage and an increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at age 2 years.

And in the long term to affect the percentage of children aged 7 meeting Key stage 1 standards for literacy and numeracy.

3.5 The broad aims and objectives of the service are to

- ❑ Raise awareness of the value of shared reading and the use of books in families with young children.
- ❑ Raise awareness of the value of shared reading and the use of books with young children among all of the agencies working in the Sure Start area.
- ❑ Increase the use of books in families with young children in the Sure Start area
- ❑ Increase the library membership of children under 4 and their families in the Sure Start area.

3.6 The contract stipulates that the service to be provided includes:

- ❑ Working with families on early learning/literacy projects e.g. story sacks, story telling courses
- ❑ Providing training to other agencies in shared reading/book use
- ❑ Working in partnership with other agencies to introduce parents to books and libraries, e.g. Bookstart & Bookstart plus.
- ❑ Training parent volunteers to support shared reading/book use.

3.7 To this end the Library Link workers have set quarterly milestones and objectives that have been agreed with both the Sure Start Central Programme Manager and their manager within SCC.

4. Why early language is so important

- 4.1 Early Years workers know through experience and research that the first years of a child's life are crucial to the development of speech and language skills. Language is the key to learning.

"There is a substantial amount of evidence that the more little children are talked to, the more rapidly they learn language."²

- 4.2 The Foundation Stage Curriculum sets out the learning goals for 3-5 year olds. This also stresses that speaking and listening skills are vital to underpin the complex demands of reading and writing.

- 4.3 Babies and young children love words and language. They love hearing and joining in with songs and rhymes. The richness of language comes as much from the sounds of words and the beat of their rhythms as in their meanings. Language is:

- **Sound** - A love for and ability with language comes from enjoyment of the sounds of words, spoken or sung. Nursery rhymes, ancient and new are rich in sound, from Humpty Dumpty to Roly Poly and the Hokey Cokey!
- **Rhyme** - Early Years research shows that young children learn through play, both free and structured. Playing with words is one of the best ways to develop speech and language skills. Rhymes help children to recognise similarities and differences in words and letters. Encouraging children to make up nonsense rhyming words and predicting the rhyming word in well-known rhymes are valuable methods for extending their language skills.
- **Rhythm** - Rhymes and songs with a strong sense of rhythm help to nurture both literacy and music skills. We know from our own experience and enjoyment that the language that affects us most - whether as a poem or political speech - does so through its

² Sally Ward, author of 'Baby Talk' a research based early intervention programme. See www.babytalk.org.uk or "Baby Talk" published by Century ISBN 0 712 68098 5

sound and rhythm. Rhythm also provides an aid to memory and provides expression when reading aloud or singing.

- **Imagery** - '*The cow jumped over the moon*' and '*bananas in pyjamas!*' Rhymes and songs can conjure up wonderful images however ridiculous, and it is because they are fantastic that they take children into the world of the imagination.

4.4 Children can learn from an early age that

*"Words in themselves do not convey meaning...the sound of them does."*³

4.5 Libraries are expanding their provision of rhyme and song sessions for babies and pre-school children. These are not only provided within library buildings themselves but are increasingly becoming a service provided through outreach work and joint projects, for example, through Sure Start librarians. Sessions are provided both within existing parent and toddler groups and as groups in their own right.

³ Robert Frost

5. Why books are so important for babies and young children

- 5.1 When asked “What is it that parents should do for their children in those early years?” **Professor Kathy Sylva**, leader of a research team reporting to the government, answered “*Take them to the library.*”
- 5.2 Professor Sylva then went on to say “the home environment can really make a difference...More important than the mother’s educational qualifications is what the mother does with the child...reads to the child, plays rhyming games, sings songs, talks about letters and sounds, and takes the child to the library.”⁴
- 5.3 **Rosemary Clarke, the head of Bookstart** – a nationally respected programme giving free books to babies – says “babies who have an early introduction to books benefit educationally, socially and emotionally. A love of stories, songs and rhymes gives children a head start in learning. A love of books is a gift for life.”
- 5.4 **Naomi Eisenstadt – Head of Sure Start** says: “Learning to read is probably the single most important factor in school success, and nothing contributes to success in early literacy as much as early exposure to books.”
- 5.5 **Colin Harrison, Professor of Literacy Studies at Nottingham University** testifies that educational achievement is profoundly influenced by early years experiences – 75% of brain development occurring between birth and the age of 2.
- 5.6 The introduction of books into children’s lives at the earliest stage has been shown to significantly influence not only literacy but also broader achievement at a later stage. Sharing books, from birth onwards,

⁴ *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education project – longitudinal study funded by the Department for Education and Skills in 2001. See www.ioe.ac.uk/cdl/eppe*

provides an enjoyable opportunity for parents and babies to learn to communicate with each other. It also helps babies develop listening skills and concentration. Parents are clearly in the best position to introduce their children to the world of words as, from the start, language is a constant feature of their developing relationship. Many parents however, lack the confidence to put into practice their own role as their children's first teachers.

5.7 Books are important because:

- Board and bath books can be treated as toys but at the same time will help children learn how to handle books, how to turn pages and how to enjoy the shapes, colours and pictures.
- Children often enjoy the same story again and again. This is not only fun but also helps to build confidence and familiarity with words.
- Sharing books, for a few special, quiet minutes, as often as possible, by associating reading with pleasurable times with a loved one, can lead to a lifelong love of books.
- Encouraging children to talk about stories and pictures, to join in with the parts they know can lead to recognising the words on the page.
- Beginner readers learn that print on the page actually means something. Words name things, tell us stories and give us information.

6. Groups and Activities provided by Library Services

6.1 Sure Start Central Library Services are contracted to provide a range of groups, services & activities. The services listed are funded wholly or partly by Sure Start.

6.1.1 The role of the Sure Start Family Link Librarians is:

- ❑ To raise awareness of the value of sharing books with young children and to increase the use of books in families in the Sure Start area
- ❑ To support and develop parents' and carers' understanding of how reading and books contribute to children's development through a range of activities and training
- ❑ To raise awareness of the above among all agencies working in the Sure Start area
- ❑ To increase library membership (and active use⁵) of children under 4 and their families in the Sure Start area
- ❑ To support and inform the provision of library services provided by the Central Library and the Bookbus
- ❑ To work with other services towards social inclusion and community involvement and to value the diverse nature of the Sure Start Central area
- ❑ To promote an awareness of equal opportunities through the selection and promotion of appropriate books and materials, and to provide information and advice on these issues to parents, carers and other agencies

⁵ Active library use is defined by the Sure Start Unit as "use of a library within the last year."

6.1.2 Funding provided by Sure Start Central allows the Family Link Librarians to provide a number of groups & activities for families within the Sure Start area, including:

- Working with families on storybags⁶, providing taster sessions and longer training courses in which parents are involved in making and designing Storybags, and learning how to use them as storytelling aids with their children.
- Providing training to other agencies in shared reading, book use and pre-literacy skills
- Working in partnership with other agencies to introduce parents to books and libraries e.g. Bookstart⁷, Bookstart Plus⁷
- Training parent volunteers to support shared reading and book use among families by building on existing skills
- Rhyme time sessions – To encourage the use of songs, rhythm, rhyme and stories to support language development in an informal and enjoyable manner
- Working with the Toy Library and other family literacy agencies to support informal learning activities. This has included the establishment of libraries in each new Sure Start Central base
- To develop the role of the library as a source of information within the Sure Start area, offering language resources and information about Sure Start activities.
- Lending books and other materials to families from Library Sessions.
- Sharing books and Storytelling sessions for parents, showing them the variety of books available and the numerous ways possible of sharing and enjoying books with young children.

⁶ Storybags – bags containing a story, props to help tell the story, a related non-fiction book, a game and guidance for parents, which can be commercially made or made by various groups of people for use with young children. Making Storybags is an informal and non-threatening way of talking about how stories work and encouraging sharing of stories and storytelling.

⁷ Bookstart and Bookstart Plus – a national programme that works through locally based organisations to give a free pack with books to babies and guidance material for parents and carers. Bookstart packs are usually given out by Health Visitors at each child's 8 month check-up and Bookstart Plus at 18 months.

Reading/language skills are not necessarily needed – parents can help their child to talk about the pictures in their home language and tell the story together.

- Library based events, which bring groups of families into the Central Library for a taste of the services on offer and to encourage these families to register.

6.2 In addition to the services funded by Sure Start Central, Library Services also provides a number of groups, services and activities in the area for families with young children through mainstream funding. These include:

6.2.1 The Central Children's Library is a part of the Central Library based within the Civic Centre, which is in close proximity to the Sure Start Central area (See map 1 page 4). The Children's Library has a large and varied collection of books, including board books for babies, picture books, beginner and developing reader books, children's novels, teenagers and young adults, and a broad range of information books. A parents' collection includes books and resources to support parents in addressing a wide range of parenting issues and concerns. Children and parents can also borrow story cassettes and CDs, hire videos and DVDs and have free access to the Internet for up to two hours a day.

6.2.2 The Children's Library also provide a weekly storytime and simple craft activity, and a 'Music, Rhythm and Rhyme' session. During the school holidays there are also activities for children (mainly craft) many of which can be attended by children under five if accompanied by parents. The children's library is also increasingly offering events in partnership with the Sure Start Family Link librarians specifically targeted at Sure Start Central families.

6.2.3 The Bookbus regularly visits a number of pre-school groups in the Sure Start Central area providing storytime and storiesack sessions

for children under 4 years. It also attends events run for families in the area providing stories and activities.

6.3 Various events are planned throughout the year to promote the use of the library service and books amongst Sure Start families. These have included:

- Stories, rhymes and library promotion at fun-days such as the St Mary's Festival and Mayflower Park
- A 'welcome to Sure Start' book presentation to existing and new Sure Start families at the Quays leisure complex and other events.
- Regular storytelling events in Southampton Parks – especially during the summer holidays – to bring together families from all communities in Sure Start Central and to encourage families to come into the Central Library
- The Family Link Librarians have taken special city library schemes and promotions to Sure Start groups e.g. Southampton Favourite Books to Share⁸, the Summer Reading Challenge⁹ and the Bookstart Bookcrawl¹⁰.
- A Family Learning project (March to July 2004) funded a free monthly bus visit to the Central Library from the Newtown/Nicholstown area. About Fifteen new families have become library members through these visits and some of them now visit regularly.
- A Family Learning project is currently funding the design of a leaflet of action and nursery rhymes to give out to and use with families both in Southampton and in Sure Start groups.

⁸ Favourite Books to Share – In this city-wide scheme, parents and children can vote for one of six books intended for pre-school children. The short-list of books is chosen in part by Sure Start parents. The winning author/illustrator receives an award at a public event and a participating family wins book vouchers.

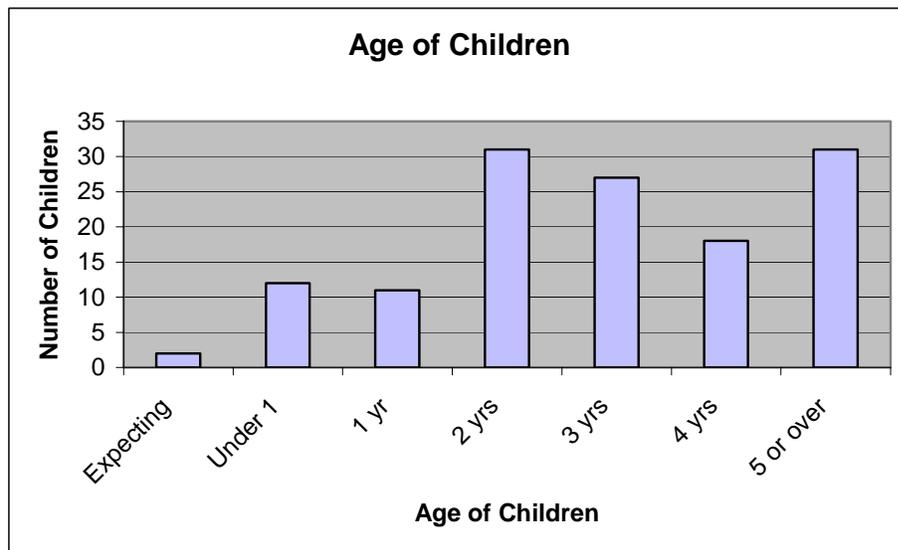
⁹ Summer Reading Challenge – annual summer challenge for children to read at least six books and collect stickers and eventually a certificate and medal presented by the Mayor of Southampton.

¹⁰ Bookstart Baby Bookcrawl – a pre-school version of the Summer Reading Challenge which is being piloted in Southampton in Sure Start library groups.

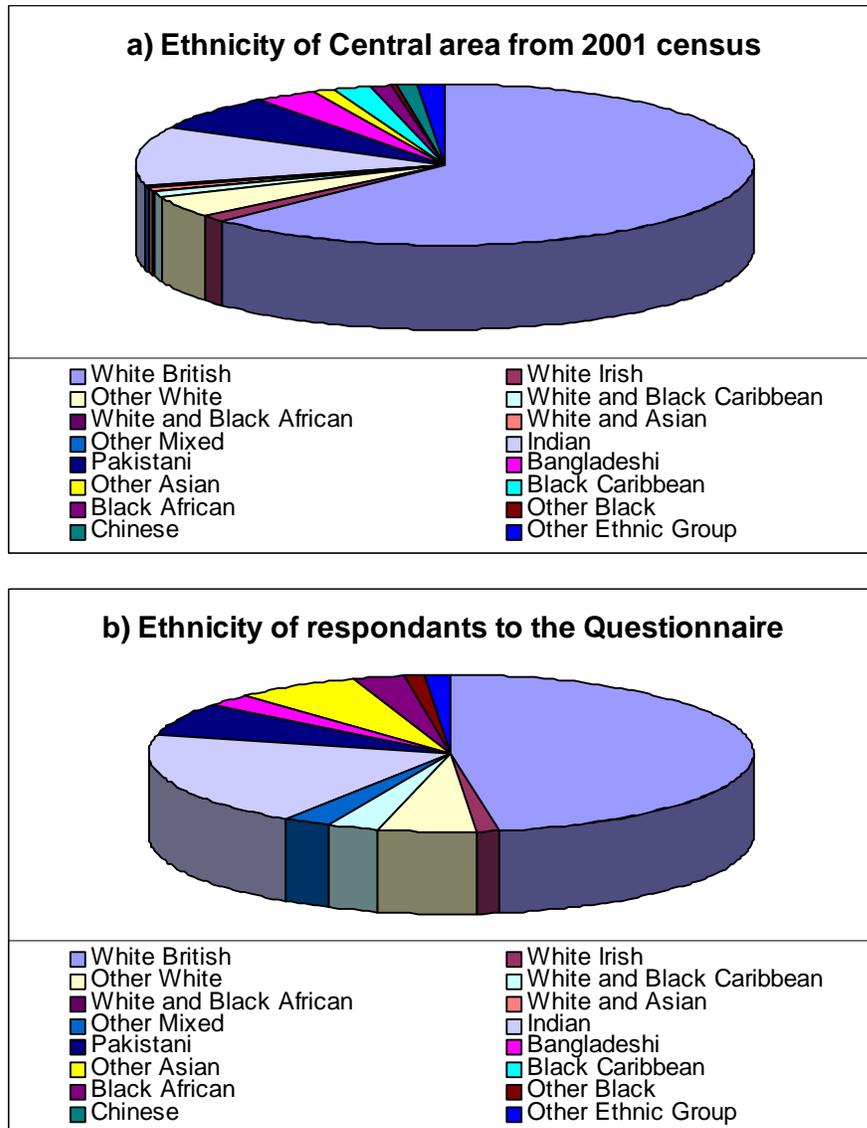
- 6.4 A comprehensive list of current activities provided by the Library Service and Sure Start including days, times and venues is included in appendix 1.

7. Questionnaire Results & Analysis

7.1 80 questionnaires were completed by parents or carers who are responsible for children under the age of 4. This represents approximately 11% of all parents or carers in the Sure Start Central area. Of the parents surveyed 72 were female and 4 were male (4 chose not to complete this question). At the time the survey was conducted the respondents were responsible for 130 children and 2 mothers were pregnant. The majority of these children (80%) were 2 years of age or older including 49 children (37%) who were outside the Sure Start age range but had younger siblings under the age of 4.



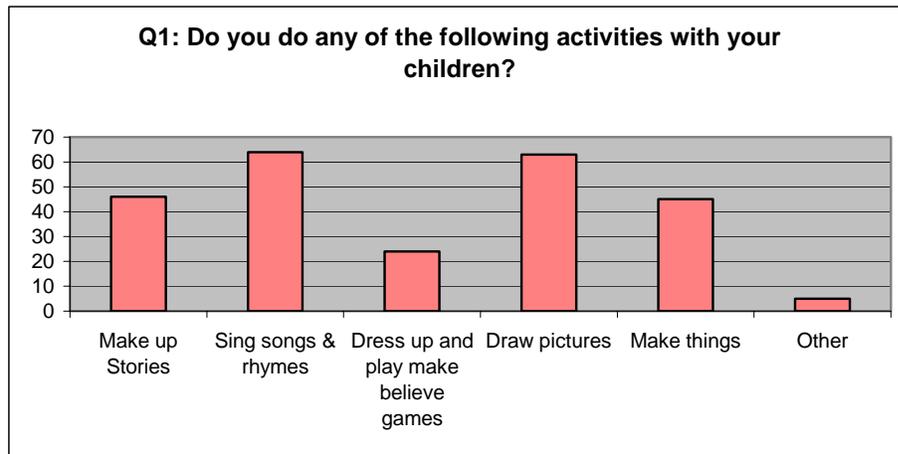
7.2 Due to the richly diverse nature of the local population it was important to ensure the sample of those interviewed represented a good cross-section of the community. The pie charts below compare the ethnic breakdown of the entire Population of the Sure Start Central area with those interviewed. These show that those surveyed represent a good mix of the population, and are broadly reflective of the area as a whole.



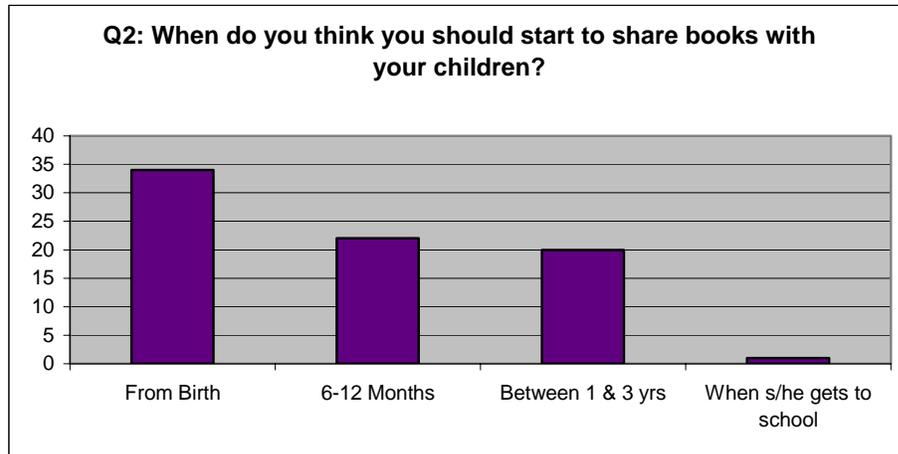
7.3 Firstly the questionnaire was trying to establish what activities parents/carers did with their children. There were 6 options and respondents could select as many of the 6 as they wished. The most popular activities were singing songs & rhymes (80%) and drawing

pictures (79%) with just over half making up stories (58%) and making things (56%). The 5 other comments were:

- Playing music all the time
- Cooking Cakes
- Reading
- Taking them to the park &
- Swimming

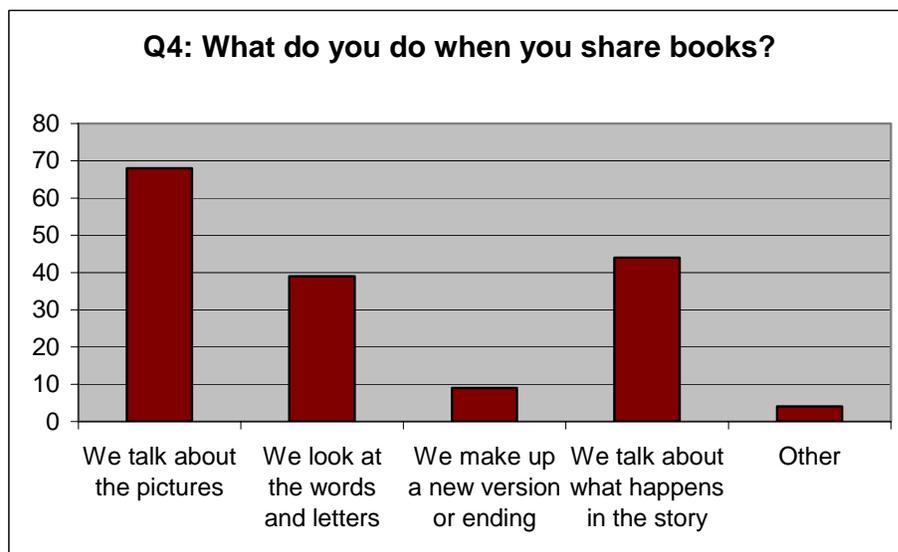


7.4 Encouragingly 34 respondents believed that books should be shared with children from birth. All but one parent/carer believed that books should be shared with children before they reach school. Of the parents/carers who do share books with their children nearly half (48%) do so every day with a further 35 sharing a book at least once a week with their child. Only 3 of the respondents shared a book less than once a week with 2 who never share a book with their children.



7.5 When sharing books 68 of the parents/carers talk about the pictures with the children, 44 talk about what happens in the story and 39 look at the words and letters. Only 9 of those asked made up a new version of the story or a new ending to the story. The 4 other suggestions were:

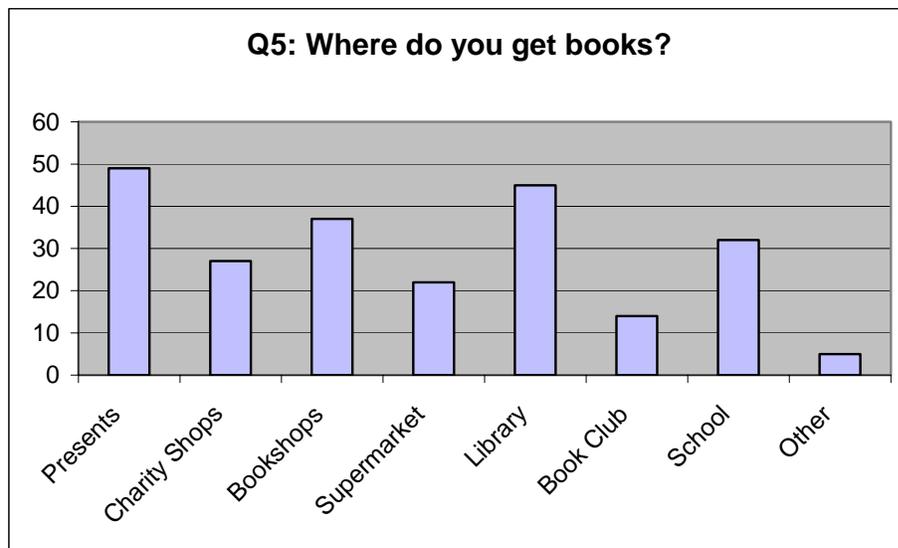
- I let my son look at the pictures and colours
- She tells the story by looking at the pictures
- Learn bits of the story by heart &
- Point at pictures



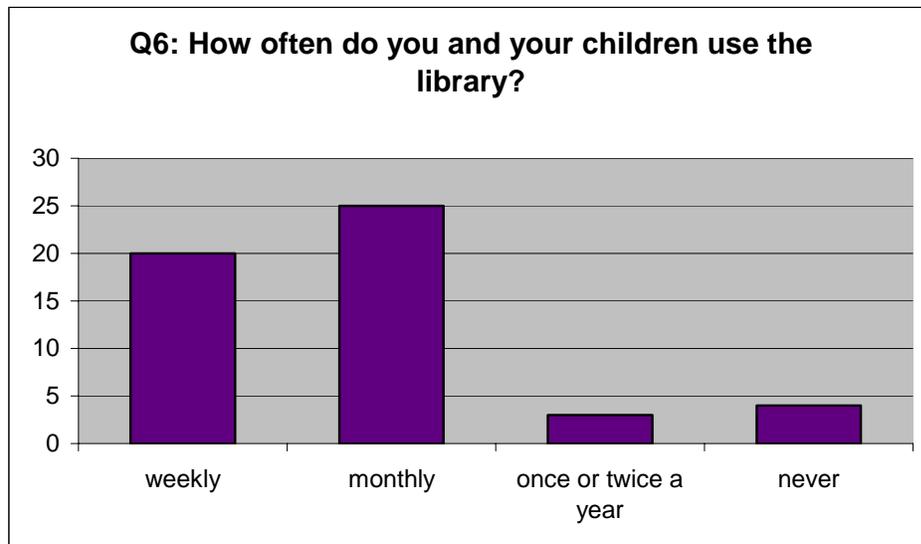
7.6 Question 5 asked where people get the books they share with their children. Over half of those questioned receive books as presents

(61%) or get their books from the library (56%). Just under half buy books from a bookshop (46%) or receive books through the child's school (40%). Roughly a third buy books at charity shops (34%) or at the supermarket (28%) with 14 (18%) belonging to a book club. The 5 other responses were:

- Book Vendors e.g. Bookman
- Books parents had themselves as children
- Friends passing there old books on
- Book Bus &
- Nursery



7.7 Of those surveyed 60% were a member of a library and 41% had registered their children with a library. The majority (80%) of those who had joined a library are members of the Central Southampton Library with the others being members of local libraries around Southampton. Out of those who were library members 20 stated that they visit a library weekly with 25 visiting monthly. 4 of the registered library users never use the library with 3 only visiting a library once or twice a year.



7.8 Nearly all (87%) of registered library users visit the library to borrow books with just under half (44%) using the library to borrow videos or DVDs. Roughly a fifth of the registered library users use the library for holiday activities (17%), to borrow storytapes (19%) or to use the internet (17%) with 28% using the library for storytimes or rhymetimes.

7.9 Question 7 asked what people liked about the library. Many of the responses were to do with the good variety of books on offer and also how regularly the books are updated. There were also a good number of responses that were very positive about the children’s area and the activities offered to children at the library. The staff are also mentioned as being friendly, helpful and funny. One Library user stated, “Everything is nice about the library.” (A full list of responses can be found in appendix 4)

7.10 There were few responses to the question “what do you not like about the library.” Two people mentioned that they felt under pressure to keep their children quiet and one person said they thought the library was boring. The only other complaints were the cost of hiring videos/DVDs, the cleanliness, the lack of choice and the distance from their home to the library.

- 7.11 There was a very wide range of titles given for the respondent's favourite story. The most popular books were Winnie The Pooh, Thomas the Tank Engine, Kipper the Dog, Postman Pat and Spot the Dog.
- 7.12 The people who were not registered with the library were then asked why they did not use the library. Of the 32 who are not registered with the library 9 believed their children would damage books, 6 believed the library was too far away from their home and 4 didn't realise that children under the age of 5 years old could borrow books. Only 1 of those who are not registered with the library thought there was a charge to borrow books. All three of the other comments stated that they did not use the library because they had not got around to joining yet.
- 7.13 The questionnaire then moves onto Sure Start library activities. When filling out the questionnaire a list was shown to the parent/carer showing all the library activities that Sure Start offers. Of the 80 parents/carers asked 34 had been to at least one Sure Start library activity. These 34 were then asked their opinion on five different aspects of the activities offered (the day, The time, The Venue used, The staff and the activities offered) and whether they were good, okay or bad. The only negative or "bad" response was that the times of the activities were too early in the morning. Otherwise all responses were positive with at least 70% thinking that each of the aspects was "good." The most positive response was that 100% of all replies thought that the staff that ran the Sure Start library activities were "good."
- 7.14 29 of the 34 replies responded positively to question 11, which asked whether parents and carers are encouraged to make comments and suggestions about Sure Start Library activities. Most of those who answered said they were able to talk to staff at events or activities with 2 saying they used a suggestion box and one mentioning the monitoring form as a way of communicating. Once again the staff

received positive comments with one reply stating that the staff are friendly and helpful.

- 7.15 In reply to the question why did you attend a Sure start library event 16 of the 30 replies mentioned that they thought it was good, fun or educational for their child. Of the other replies 3 mentioned that going was a good way to meet other parents and friends. The Sure Start library activities most commonly visited by the parent's/carers who responded to the questionnaire are Come and Play, Tots n' Tunes, Let's Play together, Happy Faces and Cottontails.
- 7.16 The final question asked whether anyone had any ideas for the future. The four suggestions were Music Activities, craft sessions, and more free books with a variety and more summer park activities.
- 7.17 When Sure Start Central opened in 2001 there were 49 children aged between 0 and 4 who were actively registered with the library in the Sure Start area. The numbers of active library memberships has increased every year to its present level of 79 which represents 10% of all the children aged 0-4 in the area. This compares to a figure of about 12% active membership for children under 4 in the city as a whole.
- 7.18 Attendance of the Sure Start library services has been fairly constant over the last year with between 10 and 15 children aged under 4 attending the tots n' tunes sessions every month. The teddy bears picnic, which ran three times in the last summer holiday, had very good numbers of under 4s with 24 in June and 20 in August. However, due to very poor weather only 5 turned up in July. The stories in the park events have taken place three times and each time the numbers of under 4s attending have increased from 7 in December 2002 to 20 in August 2003. In the time since the Sure Start Library services have been in place 8 adults have also received training in story telling.

8. Observations & Conclusions

- 8.1 As non-probability convenience sampling methods were used for the questionnaire, due to time restraints, the majority of those surveyed had already accessed Sure Start in some form. It was therefore more likely that they had heard about the services offered by the library through other Sure Start activities. However, it was agreed that although this would not necessarily provide an accurate sample of hard to reach groups or those not accessing Sure Start services, it would provide a sound representation of the views of Sure Start Central users in relation to Sure Start Central Library Services.
- 8.2 Research has shown that introducing children to reading at an early age can be crucial to a child's speech and language development. It is therefore important that Sure Start Central and the library services work closely together to provide children with access to books and fun activities, which encourage the active use of books. This evaluation has shown that a high proportion of those asked were happy with the activities and events provided by the library services and Sure Start Central and particularly happy with the Sure Start Library Staff.
- 8.3 What is encouraging is that most parents and carers surveyed said they share books with their children before they reach school. This is important as the earlier children are exposed to books the more they will benefit educationally, socially and emotionally. However, there were still only a minority of parents that shared books with their children from birth (42%).
- 8.4 There was no control group of parents who did not access Sure Start with which to compare the questionnaire results on book sharing from Sure Start users, therefore it is not possible to say whether the generally positive results reflected the messages, which parents had heard within Sure Start. The questionnaire results can however be used as a baseline for future surveys.

- 8.5 Of those surveyed just over half borrowed books from the library. However, over 60% received books as presents, and as the majority of those surveyed were Sure Start members this could relate to the free books given to Sure Start parents in welcome packs and through bookstart. When parents register with Sure Start Central they receive a free book in the Welcome pack and are invited to join the library where they receive another free book as soon as they become a library member. A number of parents liked to buy new books at bookshops, supermarkets or through a book club. This could be due to the reasons brought up in point 8.6. Parents may feel reluctant to borrow books if they are worried about damage and are therefore more likely to buy a new book which is then “their property”
- 8.6 This evaluation has shown that a good proportion of those surveyed are library members and a good number access the Sure Start library services. As previously stated the majority of those surveyed had already accessed some form of Sure Start activity or event. It is therefore clear that Sure Start Central and Library Services are working together to encourage more parents to join up & use the library. This is evident in the increased level of Library membership of under 5s since the establishment of Sure Start Central in December 2001. Active library membership of Under 4s in the area has risen from 49 in 2001 to the present level of 79, which represents a 60% increase over the 2 years. At 10% of the Under 4s in the area, the level of active library membership in Central Sure Start is nearing the comparable figure for the city as a whole. However, there are still many parents/carers in the area who have not joined their children to the library and who may not realise the range services on offer.
- 8.7 The questionnaire also brought up some issues regarding the Central Library. Many parents/carers believed that their children would damage books and they would have to pay for the damage. In addition some parents also believe that children have to be quiet at the library. Some

respondents to the questionnaire also thought there was a charge to borrow books with others not realising that children under 5 could borrow books at all.

- 8.8 Although the activities and events provided by Sure Start are very good, it is the personality of the staff that makes the programme work so well. Their flexibility in going out to the community is also a positive as they are being pro-active rather than waiting for the community to come to them. The type of activity and environment that is provided (for example story sacks in the park) can take away the stigma that many people may have that reading a book has to be a quiet and non-involved activity. The friendly attitude of the staff will also encourage parents to come again and will also make the activities fun to be involved in. It must be remembered that replicating the services on offer cannot guarantee success as the personalities of the Family Link Librarians cannot be replicated and these personalities are the key to the success of the services offered.
- 8.9 Books are important to the local community, as families believe in the education of their children. Therefore if a parent/carer sees that there is an educational benefit from a group or activity they are more likely to attend especially if as one parent suggested that more free books are given out.

9. Recommendations

The evaluation of the Family Link Librarians' work was overwhelmingly positive. They were working well with families and with other agencies and were increasing active library membership among Sure Start children. However, they are aware of areas where improvements could be made. The following are suggested recommendations for further actions:

- 9.1 Greater publicity could increase the awareness of activities, groups and events. One possibility could be to provide kinderboxes full of good quality books for parents and children to use e.g. at Gateway, the benefits bureau, at surgeries, clinics at the Royal South Hants hospital and at East Park Terrace Family Planning and children's clinics. These boxes could display information about the library and Sure Start services and could possibly be maintained by volunteers. For those who feel the library is too far or too daunting, information about groups in the Sure Start area where books can be borrowed is also important.
- 9.2 The development of clear family friendly information literature about current library policies and services, which could include the recent removal of fines for children, and the message that children do not have to be quiet, could help to change many parents' perception of the library. More effective use of existing material could also help to alleviate worries about damage to books, for example the poster designed by Southampton libraries titled 'Free baby food!' which gives the message that babies and toddlers will not be charged for damage to books.
- 9.3 Ongoing training of Sure Start staff, especially Health Visitors and Family Support Workers by the Sure Start librarians needs to ensure that certain clear messages about the library service and about the use of books are consistently conveyed to parents and especially to 'hard to reach' families. This should include:
 - That libraries and their activities are free

- That babies can borrow books from birth
- That babies and toddlers will not be charged for damage to books
- That children do not have to be quiet
- That children with particular needs are welcome
- That children's librarians are happy to help with the choice of books

9.4 Staff should also be made aware of the range of books and services on offer including the parents' collection and dual language books. The range of languages available is constantly increasing and parents should be encouraged to ask for the language they require. However, as many dual language books are written for school age children, it is also important to emphasise that for children under 4yrs it is often better to talk about the pictures in the child's home language and/or English rather than to concentrate on the text. It would be beneficial for groups of staff, such as Health Visitors and Family Support Workers to visit the Central Library and be given information as well as seeing for themselves what is available for Sure Start families. They in turn might suggest ways of making the library more accessible. Suggestions from parents included more park events in the summer and also more musical based activities.

9.5 Better use of existing materials and the further use of Book Bugs (a book and toy in a bag) should make resources more accessible to parents/carers. This could involve the development of sessions on the use of books with the youngest children and the making of related props.

9.6 Videos of existing Tots and Tunes sessions could be produced for use at home and to encourage others to attend the sessions.

9.7 A laptop for use by the Family Link Librarians has just been purchased. This should enable families to join the library in the community and to borrow books from existing groups. Books are already being issued in this way but the laptop will enable better monitoring and therefore also

show the actual increase in active library membership. It may also enable books to be issued at more venues.

- 9.8 Information about language services, courses and tapes for learning English, books in various languages and dual language books, should be made more accessible to parents e.g. at Sure Start and library groups and events.
- 9.9 Running a book club or occasional book-selling event could satisfy many parents who like to own rather than borrow books. It might first be worth canvassing parents' opinion about what sort of books they would buy and how much they would be prepared to pay.

Identify day/times/venues of groups/events/activities

venue	day/time	group/activity
Northam Community Centre	Monday pm	Happy Faces parent & toddler group - stories and rhymes
Orchard Lane	Monday	Storysacks course - enabling parents to make a storysack
St Mary's School	Tuesday am	Cottontails parent & toddler Group - stories and rhymes
Northam Community Centre	Tuesday pm	Tots and Tunes - rhymes and songs Issuing books and Book Bugs (book and toy in bag)
James Street Church	Thursday am	Tots and Tunes - rhymes and songs
Maytree Family Room	Thursday pm	Input to 'Power Parents' parenting group - rhymes and songs, information about library and Sure Start services

SureStart

Library Survey

We are trying to find out what local parents and carers think about library services. We would really like to hear your views and comments. All answers you choose to give will remain confidential within the Sure Start Central programme and will only be used for Sure Start purposes. All personal details will be kept according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

1. Do you do any of these activities with your children who are aged under 4?

(tick as many boxes as you like)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| make up stories | <input type="checkbox"/> | sing songs and rhymes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| dress up and play make believe games | <input type="checkbox"/> | draw pictures | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| make things | <input type="checkbox"/> | other (please write below) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. When do you think you should start sharing books with your children?

(tick one box only)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| from birth | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6-12 months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| between 1 and 3 years | <input type="checkbox"/> | when s/he goes to school | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. How often do you share books with your child? (tick one box only)

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| every day | <input type="checkbox"/> | three or four times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| once or twice a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | less than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

4. What do you do when you share books? (tick as many boxes as you like)

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| we talk about the pictures | <input type="checkbox"/> | we look at the words and letters | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| we make up a new version or ending | <input type="checkbox"/> | we talk about what happens in the story | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | other (please write below) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. Where do you get books? (tick as many boxes as you like)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| presents | <input type="checkbox"/> | charity shops | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| bookshops | <input type="checkbox"/> | supermarket | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| library | <input type="checkbox"/> | book club | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (please write below) | <input type="checkbox"/> | school | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Appendix 2

6. Are you a library member? yes no
Is your child a library member? yes no

If **yes** which libraries do you use? (please write below)

How often do you and your children use it? (please tick one box only)

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> | monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| once or twice a year | <input type="checkbox"/> | never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Which of these do you do for or with your children at the library?

(tick as many boxes as you like)

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| borrow books | <input type="checkbox"/> | borrow video's/DVD's | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| borrow storytapes | <input type="checkbox"/> | storytimes or rhymetimes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| holiday activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | use the internet | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you don't use the library, are there any particular reasons?

(tick as many boxes as you like)

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| too far away | <input type="checkbox"/> | don't know where it is | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| poor choice of books | <input type="checkbox"/> | children might damage books | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| not welcoming to children | <input type="checkbox"/> | unfriendly staff | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| didn't know children under 5 could borrow books | <input type="checkbox"/> | thought there was a charge to borrow books | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (please write below) | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

7. What *do* you like about the library? (please state below)

8. What *don't* you like about the library? (please state below)

9. Do you and your child have a favourite story or character from a story?

(please say who or what it is)

P.S. Did you know your baby can get a FREE book if s/he joins the library?

In the next few questions we would like to check out the days, times and venues of Sure Start library activities and get your views on how we could improve our service.

10. Have you attended any Sure Start library activities (see back page) Yes No

If yes, what do you think of...	Good 	Okay 	Bad 
The day/s Sure Start library activities are held on?			
The time/s of Sure Start library activities?			
The venues used to hold Sure Start library activities?			
The staff who run the Sure Start library activities?			
The activities offered by Sure Start library services?			

If you have entered bad  for any of the above questions please tell us why?

11. Are parents and carers encouraged to make comments and suggestions about Sure Start library activities? Yes No

If yes how are you able to make comments?

12. Why did you decide to come to a Sure Start library activity?

13. Have you attended any other Sure Start groups or services because you found out about them from coming to the library activities? If yes, what?

14. Do you have any idea's for future activities that library services could provide or get involved in for Sure Start? If yes, what?

In the next few questions we would like to ask you a bit about yourself, this information will of course remain confidential to Sure Start Central.

15. Are you? Male Female

16. What is your date of birth? / /

17. How old is/are your child/children? (tick one box for each child)

Expecting Under 1 1 year 2 years
 3 years 4 years 5 or over

18. How would you describe your ethnic background? (tick one box only)

White

- British
- Irish
- Traveller of Irish Heritage
- Gypsy/Roma
- Any other White background
(please write below)

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background
(please write below)

Mixed

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed background
(please write below)

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background
(please write below)

Chinese

- Any other Ethnic Group
(please write below)

18. If you would like to be entered in the FREE prize draw to win £50 of book tokens, please give your details below.

Title (please circle) Miss / Mrs / Ms / Mr / Other _____ (please write)

Name: (please print) _____

Address: _____

Postcode:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Telephone Number: _____

Sure Start Central offer a wide variety of groups and activities for families with children under 4 in your area. If you register with Sure Start you will receive regular information about groups, services, activities, events and trips you might like to come along to. You may also like to get more involved with the programme and take part in future evaluations.

If you would like know more about Sure Start Central activities please and have not yet registered (or are not sure if you have registered) please complete the section's below. The answers you choose to give will be put on computer and only Sure Start Staff will be able to see it.

Please ✓ if you require any of the following:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bengali বাংলা | <input type="checkbox"/> Gujarati ગુજરાતી | <input type="checkbox"/> Punjabi ਪੰਜਾਬੀ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese 中文 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindi हिन्दी | <input type="checkbox"/> Urdu اردو |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Audio Tape | <input type="checkbox"/> LP Large Print | <input type="checkbox"/>  E-mail |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Disk | <input type="checkbox"/>  Braille | |

I understand that this information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will only be used for Sure Start purposes.

Signature of Parent/Carer _____

Evaluation Action Plan 2004 - 2004

Sure Start Central

Library Services

Timeframe	Task	Lead	Others Involved	Method
	Establish Baseline Data			
	What groups/services/activities do library services currently provide for Sure Start Central (funded or partly funded by Sure Start Central)	EC GB	Sure Start Central	Write a few pages on what library services offer funded by Sure Start and in the Sure Start area. Why these activities/services were chosen, what they aim to achieve etc.
	What groups/services/activities do library services currently provide in the Sure Start area what are not funded or partly funded by Sure Start.	EC GB	Clive Barnes	

	Number of children attending Library Services Sure Start groups/events/activities over the last year (breakdown by group/service/activity)	JD	EC GB	Sure Start Central database and library services monitoring records
	Identify day/times of groups/events activities	EC GB	Sure Start Central	
	Identify venue of groups/events activities	EC GB	Sure Start Central	
	Number of parents/families attending library services Sure Start groups/events/activities over the last year (breakdown by groups/service/activity).	JD	EC GB	Sure Start Central database and library services monitoring records.

Research and Information				
	<p>What are the National Sure Start targets and milestones relating to library services?</p> <p>What other targets do library service groups/activities and events affect?</p>	<p>SD RW</p>	<p>EC GB AF</p>	<p>Look at Library target <i>Increased use of Libraries by families with young children in Sure Start areas(% of children 0-3 in the Sure Start area with active membership of the library)</i> and also at other targets that library service provision should affect e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting support and information available for all parents in Sure Start areas (% children 0-3 seen by programme in last 12 months) • All children in Sure Start areas to have access to good quality play and learning opportunities, helping progress towards early learning goals when they get to school. • 75% families reporting personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of services providing family support (%parents with children 0-4 very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied with local services for young children).

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Sure Start programmes to have parent representation on local programme boards (no. parents on partnership executive/management board as a proportion of total members) • All Sure Start programmes to have developed local targets for ensuring links between local Sure Start partnerships and employment service job centres. • % children aged 7 achieving level 2 or above in Key Stage 1 tests for reading, writing and spelling • Speech and Language
	What is the importance of Language in the context of child development? Why is early language important? Why is it important to introduce books to babies?	EC GB	AF	Chapter set in a theoretical context of value of books in early child development with operational examples
	What are the local targets/milestones/objectives relating to library services?	SD AF	EC GB	Look at the full plan, business plan and SLA's.

	<p>How well do library services work in partnership with other Sure Start groups and agencies?</p> <p>What groups/activities are joint facilitated with other Sure Start staff?</p> <p>What other Sure Start groups do libraries regularly promote and how is this measured?</p> <p>Which other Sure Start groups/services regularly promote library services?</p>	<p>EC GB</p>	<p>SD</p>	
	<p>How do parents currently get to feedback on Sure Start groups/services/activities provided by libraries?</p>	<p>EC GB</p>	<p>SD</p>	
	<p>Are parents encouraged to make comments & suggestions?</p>	<p>EC GB</p>	<p>SD</p>	
	<p>How are parental comments recorded and taken back? What is the process for incorporating them into business planning and re-shaping service delivery?</p>	<p>EC GB</p>	<p>SD</p>	
	<p>Are parents encouraged to develop personal skills e.g. access training, join Sure Ideas or the Management Board etc.</p>	<p>EC GB</p>	<p>SD</p>	

	<p>What involvement is there with other community groups and representatives e.g. promotion of library services in Mosques/Temple's/Gurdwara's?</p>	<p>EC GB</p>	<p>SD</p>	
	<p>How easy is it to feed into Sure Start key decisions? e.g. via Virtual Team meetings, 1:1 with PM, Business Planning, SLA's</p>	<p>EC GB</p>		
	<p>Outcomes for Children and Families</p> <p>What changes do library services want to facilitate for local parents, children and families?</p> <p>How do you measure success?</p> <p>What achievements have local parents, children and families made?</p> <p>Are there any case studies/examples of success/achievements?</p>	<p>EC GB</p>	<p>SD</p>	

	Consultation			
	Questionnaire to parents/carers accessing Sure Start library groups/services/activities.	EC GB	VB	Parental questionnaire to go to parents and carers' currently accessing Sure Start library services to be delivered now and repeated in 6 monthly intervals.
	Postal Questionnaire to all families in the Sure Start area re: use of library services	AF	JD	
	Focus Groups	VB	Sure Start Central Team	
	Other Sure Start Programmes			
	Contact other Sure Start programmes to see what work they do with library services	AF		Get an idea of activities offered and services promoted through Sure Start. Which ones were successful & which ones weren't etc.
	Cost Effectiveness			
	Evaluate the cost effectiveness of library services provision.	RW	SD JD	
	Analyse Data and Write Report			
	Analyse interview results	RW AF		
	Write evaluation report	AF RW SD	CW	
	Write Summary Report	AF		

Present Report				
	Print copies of final document	LC	AF	
	Mail out full report	AF	Sure Start Central Sure Start and Children's Fund Team	
	Present final report	AF	CW	To be presented to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sure Start Central Management Board • Sure Start Reference Group • EYDCP • Sure Ideas Group • NESS

EC - Emma Childe - Library Services
 GB - Gwenda Baker - Library Services
 JD - Jake Dovey - Sure Start Central
 SD - Simon Dennison - Sure Start Central Manager
 VB - Veronica Bailey - Sure Start Central Deputy Manager
 AF - Amanda Fisher - Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
 RW - Richard Wellcoat - Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
 CW - Catherine White - Sure Start and Children's Fund Manager
 LC - Lin Clark

Appendix 4

