

# Westminster (Church Street) Sure Start Lessons from Employment and Employability Initiatives

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## Introduction

Research commissioned in 2003 by the Mayor of London<sup>1</sup> revealed that more children in London live in poverty than anywhere else in Britain. Tackling child poverty is one of the Governments main goals and it has set a number of challenging targets to eliminate it entirely within a generation. A whole raft of community initiatives has been forthcoming in recent years to increase activities that lead directly to improvements in **employment**, that is the proportion of parents who have jobs, and actions leading to improvements in **employability**. Employability meaning the ability to get and keep a job in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the way these assets are used and presented to others, as well as the demand for these within the labour market<sup>2</sup>. All of the above is based on the premise that if significant progress can be made today then we have the prospect of breaking the cycle of disadvantage for many children and families tomorrow. The challenge in achieving this is ensuring and planning for a supply of good quality childcare, which delivers positive outcomes for children.

## The Contribution of Sure Start

In July 2002 new resources were announced to support children and families, particularly the most vulnerable. Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare programmes were brought together under a single inter-departmental unit based in the Department of Education and Skills (DFES) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

This move reflected the important interplay between good child care, helpful and timely advice and developmental work to help individuals to discover, value and develop their skills and abilities. Within this there has been a growing understanding that when parents have been out of work for some time, have had bad experiences or encountered apparently insurmountable barriers, the building of confidence and aspiration of finding paid work must go hand in hand with strong working partnerships between local services, employers and indeed parents themselves who will want to know that employment is able to offer a 'better off' outcome for them and their families financially.

Sure Start with its emphasis on giving children the very best start in life is a central strand in the Governments drive towards helping parents aspire to, achieve and sustain financial independence. To this end employability has become one of the four core Sure Start targets

and a theme within the national evaluation. Every local programme is charged with the responsibility of working towards the Sure Start aim of reducing the number of children 0-3 years living in households where no-one is working by at least 12%. Progress towards this target is monitored and reported back to local programmes periodically in order that they can assess the impact of the services they are delivering.

## **Evaluation Rationale**

The employment and employability programmes provided by Church Street were chosen for evaluation because they offer a largely untested approach to supporting local parents who are interested in entering the world of work, vocational study or education. Much of their work is innovative and lessons need to be documented and shared to generate a shared understanding of what has worked particularly well and who has benefited. This information will help to inform the development of the service and future mainstreaming strategies to ensure that gains are both safeguarded and shared with others involved in similar work elsewhere.

## **Evaluation Aims**

- To map the scope of employability and employment related activities;
- To record mid course corrections made to specific elements of the teams work;
- To document successes and frustrations the initiative has encountered. Particularly, what has worked well and why?

## **Evaluation Methods**

- Mapping of activities, themes and issues with the Sure Start / Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) Employability Coordinator, Childcare Development Worker, Outreach Team, City of Westminster College and JobcentrePlus;
- Demographic profiling of individuals using some aspects of the service;
- Retrospective analysis of records held by the employability co-ordinator;
- Documentation of successes and frustrations the initiative has encountered.

## **Data Source**

Data used to inform this evaluation has been taken from a number of sources. These most importantly have included:

- Statistical data from the Sure Start database based upon monthly returns by Sure Start providers;

- Background data relating to the Church Street community taken from published sources;
- Findings from semi structured interviews with the Westminster Sure Start Director, Jobcentre Plus, City of Westminster College, Community Co-ordinator Employability and Childminding Recruitment Worker;
- Electronic and manual records kept on file by the Community Co-ordinator Employability;
- Statistical data supplied by the Sure Start Unit.

### **Dissemination of Findings**

- Reporting of findings to the Sure Start Board and via them to community partners;
- Dissemination of learning to a wider audience via the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) web site.

### **The Church Street Community**

Church Street neighbourhood is home to over 4,200 households, 500-plus businesses and over 80 voluntary and community groups. The ward hosts one of London's largest street markets, and an internationally acclaimed in-door antiques market. Despite obvious strengths, Church Street faces some very real challenges. It remains one of the most deprived areas in the country and local people suffer disproportionately from high unemployment, low educational attainment, heightened fear of crime and poor health<sup>3</sup>.

The neighbourhood is close to major destinations including: Paddington Basin; London's West End; and nearby visitor attractions such as Madame Tussaud's and Regent's Park. However, connections into and out of the neighbourhood are severely hindered by major arterial routes including: Edgware Road to the west; Marylebone Road to the south; the railway line to the east; and the canal to the north. These serve to create an "island site" disconnected and cut off from its immediate neighbours in the borough<sup>3</sup>.

The number of young people (under 25) and the number of single parents in the area are double the Westminster average. Less than half of Church Street's residents are in employment (45.75%), which is significantly lower than the employment levels of Westminster, England and Wales (59.2% and 60.6% respectively)<sup>3</sup>. Of those unemployed, 15% have never worked and 37% are regarded long term unemployed. Barriers to employment include lack of confidence and work history, lack of basic skills and the overcoming of language barriers and other social factors that inhibit employment access.

Despite the challenges facing the community there is a rich cultural diversity with over 30 languages spoken, with Church Street being the home to the largest Bengali community in Westminster. It has a thriving tradition of community action and Westminster Councils Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy identifies the Church Street Neighbourhood Forum (one of over 76 different partnership groups operating in Westminster) as key in progressing positive change in the neighbourhood. The Sure Start Director is the Chair of the Forum Action Group. The Training and Employment Task Group that reports to the Forum has emerged as a strong voice for local people with representation from the major education, training and employment services in the area. It has been successful in channelling funding from a number of different sources and deciding how best these might be used in a co-ordinated way within the Church Street area. This includes progression routes for those people ready to move from training to employment. The Sure Start Employability Co-ordinator is an elected representative of the Neighbourhood Action Group and a seat on its Training and Employment Task Group and important contributor to the partnership model shown in Figure 1.

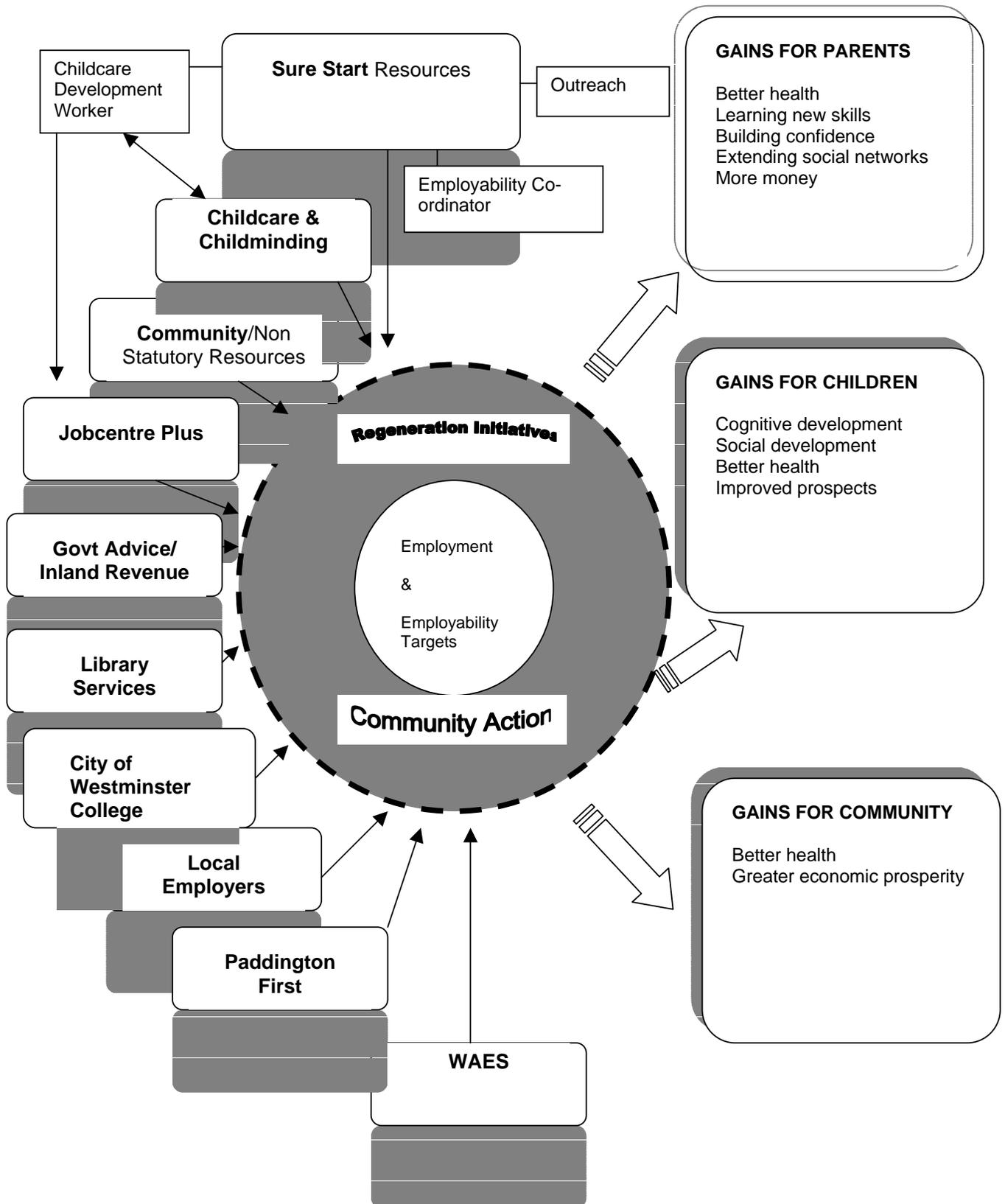
Church Street is an area benefiting from several regeneration initiatives. In partnership with Westminster City Council, the Paddington Development Trust has secured £2.65 million of Government funding for a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme in the Church Street area of the City<sup>4</sup>. The programme will provide joined up solutions to key local issues identified in the Church Street Community Plan and Environmental Masterplan<sup>5</sup> including the creation of *real employment opportunities for local people* and promotion of healthier lifestyles.

The area surrounding Church Street houses the headquarters of some large UK businesses (Marks and Spencer, British Home Stores and Woolworths). Further, there is also the presence of several large businesses/services including Sainsbury's, Westminster Primary Care Trust and St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington all of which are significant employers.

The presence of a local job centre within short walking distance of the main Church Street thoroughfare provides a range of services to people seeking employment within the vicinity. The centre is currently in the process of transition to 'Jobcentre Plus' that will offer an enhanced range of services within premises that convey clear messages to the public of friendliness, accessibility and inclusivity.

Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) have well-established sites within the Church Street boundary itself and there is significant support for community, voluntary and youth services. The most recent figures produced by WAES show that there are currently 1,550 adult students taking part in WAES courses, who live in the Church Street Ward.

**Fig 1. Employment and Employability: A Partnership Model**



## The Westminster (Church Street) Sure Start Approach to Employability

As part of the 2002 Government Spending Review the Westminster Church Street programme was allocated an additional £50,000 to meet revised targets and the table below details how the Church Street programme planned to spend this money, against each new target:

<b>Objective</b>	Improving Health
<b>PSA Target</b>	A 10% reduction in mothers who smoke in pregnancy.
<b>Appoint</b>	Smoking cessation worker (part-time)
<b>Objective</b>	Improving Children's ability to Learn
<b>SDA Target</b>	<b>Use of libraries</b>
<b>Appoint</b>	A further 0.5 FTE Bookstart Librarian (now termed Literacy Development worker)
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strengthening Families and Communities</b>
<b>PSA Target</b>	<b>Reduction in the number of 0-3 households where no one is working</b>
<b>Appoint</b>	A full-time Community Coordinator – Employability
<b>Objective</b>	Strengthening Families and Communities
<b>SDA target</b>	Links with the local EYDCP
<b>Develop</b>	Support the development of under 2 day care provision, through the neighbourhood nursery scheme, in the Portman Early Childhood Centre. This will require extra capital funding.

The introduction of a target relating to employment was seen as contentious and not initially welcomed by many sure start programmes. Locally, it was apparent that provision regarding employment information was often isolated within single organisations, with minimal 'sign posting' of the various initiatives for families. In Church Street the coordination of services was felt to be essential if parents were to fully benefit from what was already available. It is for this reason that Sure Start funded the development of a community coordinator, to link all the initiatives and offer one- to- one support to parents / carers. All existing providers from Jobcentre Plus, Adult Education to EYDCP strongly support this initiative, based upon an outreach model to ensure accessible information and support to a wider group.

In July 2002 the Programme Director received baseline data from the Sure Start Unit on the percentage of children 0-3 in workless households for the Church Street Ward and percentage of children in households receiving Job Seekers Allowance. The data given

also showed the Sure Start round 2 programme average, London average and that for rounds 1-4 and England.

**Table 1: Sure Start Unit Baseline Data**

Indicator	Church St Programme	Round 2 Average	London Average	Rounds 1-4 Average	England
% children 0-3 in workless Households	54	44.9	46.7	44.6	23.2
% of children 0-3 in households receiving JSA	6.8	5	5.5	5.2	2.6

Table 1. This shows that the percentage of children 0-3 in workless households for Church Street is almost 10% higher than the average for round 2 programmes and over 7% higher than the London average.

Statistics for 2003 showing any movement towards the target 12% reduction not yet available from the Sure Start Unit but should be available in the near future.

Sure Starts Employability Co-ordinator started work in February 2002 working full time on a 36-hour week contract. He was initially based at the WAES offices in Amberley Road outside of the Church Street boundary but moved to the Lisson Grove Health Centre in 2003. Being a full member of the WAES team he has been able to build good working relationships with colleagues and learn how adult education is planned and delivered across the borough. He is line managed by the WAES Area Manager (Community) and accountable to the Sure Start Programme Director for the achievement of the national Sure Start targets and programme milestones.

## **A Whole System Approach**

The Church Street Sure Start programme works upon the principle of a whole system approach to supporting children and families and has a particular focus on outreach work. All programme workers have developed strong inter-professional relationships that seek to promote and assist families in making connections to the most appropriate sources of help. This brokerage role has been documented in previous evaluations and places many Sure Start workers in a 'backstage technician' role where they are creating the conditions whereby parents can be helped through the maze of services to find the help that is right for them at particular time.

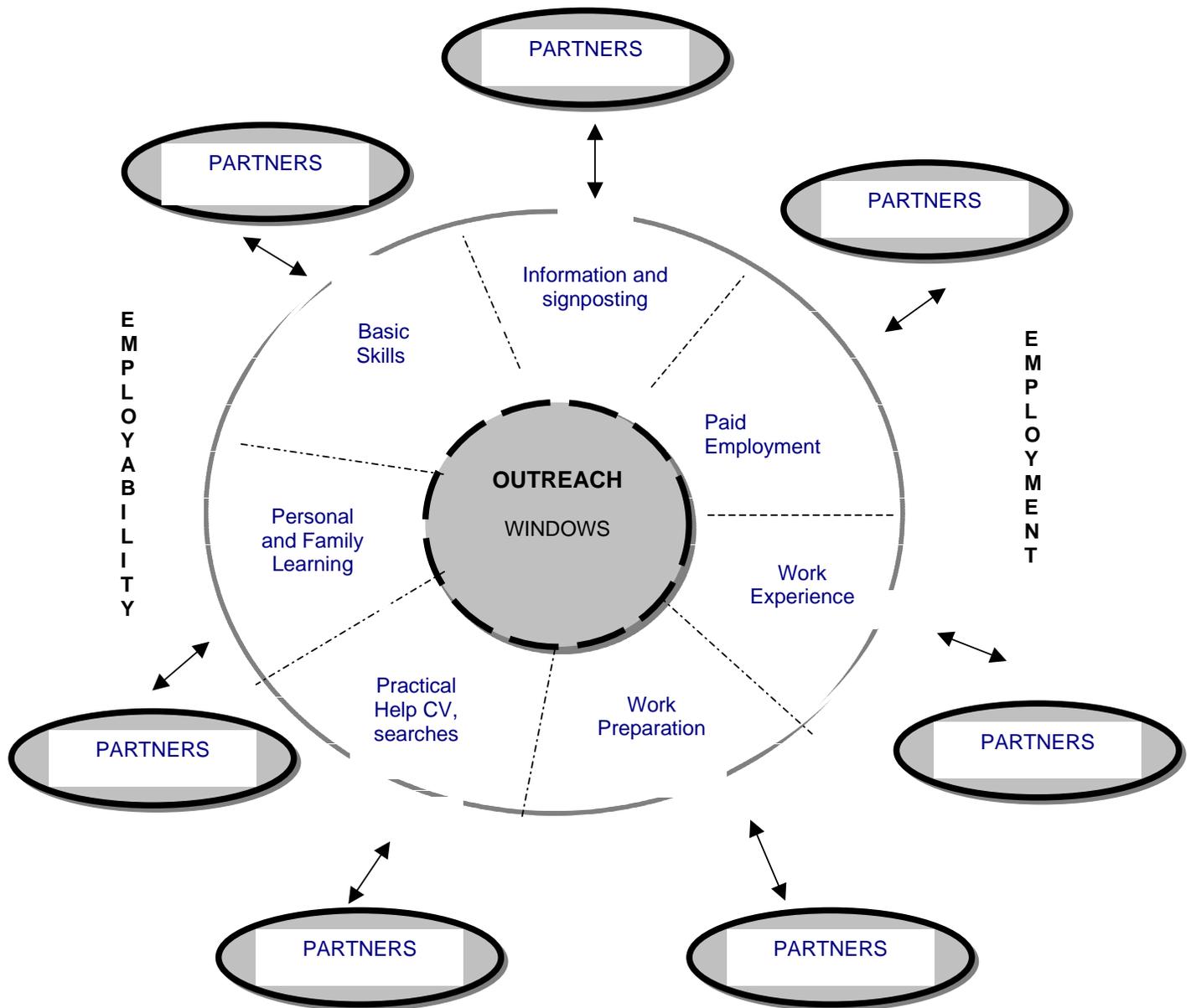
From the first home visit by the outreach team parents have information provided on the various services and supports that they might want to try. At the second visit at 18 months specific information is provided around employability and employment support. This includes detailed information on adult education and continued education, including personal development as well as where to get help with practical matters such as presenting yourself, preparing your CV, job searching and work experience.

In figure 2 the main employability strategies are shown as 7 separate but inter-linked windows all of which have a relationship to Sure Starts many community partners who make a contribution to personal or family learning and its application to the world of work. The Employability Co-ordinator is a key to widening participation in adult and continuing education and the range of employability and employment initiatives in the area. A central part of the role is to develop and maintain relationships with community groups and other agencies in order to identify and address local community needs and support. This includes, raising the profile of the various sources of help, support and advice that are currently available to local people.

The approach that has been developed does not imply a simple and straightforward model of progression through a sequence of pre-determined steps. Rather, it presents multiple opportunities for local parents to choose from a menu of services that are appropriate to them and their own goals. Parents received help from the Sure Start team to work out what they want and how to get it. The 7 window model highlights the important relationship that the sure start programme has to its many and diverse community partners. The programme aims to act as a 'change agent' by re-shaping, adding value and increasing co-ordination between mainstream provision and the sure start community itself, and recognises that its long term role is to leave a lasting legacy by mainstreaming solutions that are found to work for its target population. A good example of this can be seen in the pivotal role played by the Employability Co-ordinator in facilitating the process whereby WAES became an approved Intermediary Training Provider, for Jobcentre Plus, in the area. This has led to them being able to apply for funds from the Jobcentre to fill known gaps in training, something that they had not been in a position to do previously.

The Church Street programme was one of a number of local programmes chosen by the Sure Start Unit to participate in a thematic study of employability projects as part of the national evaluation. Church Street was chosen because of the financial investment it had put in place to help achieve the Sure Start employability objective, and its practical experience of delivery from which others might learn. Findings from this work should be available in 2004.

**Fig 2: The Church Street Model**



The Sure Start approach within Church Street means not just learning from the Sure Start experience, but the cumulative impact of the various regeneration initiatives in the area and the unique contributions of others who are helping Church Street to be a healthier and more prosperous community. To this end, Church Street Sure Start developed a 'Mainstreaming Strategy' and as a result of this a Mainstreaming Strategy Group has been established in Westminster with all key partners involved. This group looks at how key lessons from the Local Sure Start Programmes can be mainstreamed.

## **(A) Employability: Local Strategies To Build Skills and Confidence**

Sure Start plays an important role in supporting parents to think about their own goals, consider options and identify their own needs. This may involve building confidence to look at the different options available, trying out new roles such as becoming a member of the Parents Forum or filling in gaps in basic education and skills. Work undertaken by the Church Street programme is based upon learning in all its different forms and not solely in classroom settings. It acknowledges that people learn best in different ways, at different times and in different places. One of the underpinning principles has been to acknowledge all parents as the first teachers of their children and to support them in learning, applying and sharing good parenting skills. This may involve such activities as reading to their children, learning together through play or joining in with other parents attending play sessions. The outreach team have made considerable efforts to reach parents and build strong relationships with them, signposting them or accompanying them to places of help within (and outside) the Sure Start programme. Personal introductions and one-to-one coaching of many parents has proved more successful than simply signposting services or creating greater awareness of their availability in the area.

### **Steps in to Learning Sure Start and Family Learning**

Steps in to Learning (Sure Start)<sup>6</sup> is a training and development programme for all staff in Sure Start local programmes and Children's Centres. It aims to help staff recognise those parents and carers with a literacy, numeracy, or language need and encourage and signpost them to take up local learning opportunities to improve their skills. The Steps in to Learning programme is being developed on behalf of the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, Sure Start Unit, DFES, DWP by the Basic Skills Agency and partners.

Steps in to Learning is delivered flexibly and is made up of 4 modules. The training will provide local programmes with a selection of practical multi-media resources to help spread the programme to all staff.

To date, the Sure Start Childminding Development Worker and Employability Co-ordinator have attended a 2 day training course to cascade to the wider Sure Start team. They also attended the National Conference on Steps into Learning. A team day in May has been set aside to start sharing what has been learnt so far. Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) is the local Skills for Life Provider and manages a budget that enables them to deliver family learning on behalf of Sure Start. Future plans may include mainstreaming 'family learning' into WAES, we will look at our existing activities and see how they meet the

Steps into Learning criteria. It is planned to offer such sessions to the Parents Forum, starting in September, this will include finance and fund raising, “story sacks” and using the Interactive computer board with children etc.

## **Work Works Event**

The ‘Work Works’ event <sup>7</sup> for Lone Parents was held on Thursday 15 April and funded by the London Employers Coalition, through Jobcentre Plus but branded as Sure Start. It aimed to engage parents in discussion about learning and employment opportunities, to support them to consider continuing education or employment. The event was designed to involve the whole Sure Start team and many of its community partners. It was supported by local businesses with invitations being sent to 700 local families and attracted an estimated 300 people on the day. Parents could talk informally to Jobcentre Plus, undertake on-line job searches, arrange interviews and receive ‘In Work’ benefits calculations by the Inland Revenue.

A children’s soft play area, bouncy castle and ball pond were provided to create a child friendly environment. WAES students offered makeovers and childrens face painting. Crèche facilities were provided to allow parents to seek advice and information in the knowledge that their children would be safe and happy.

This was the first ‘Work Works’ event in England, and the first time that ALL Sure Start families had been invited to attend an event of this kind.

## **Drop in Advice Sessions – Lisson Grove Health Centre, Neighbourhood Office & Library**

Drop- in and advice sessions are run by the Employability Co-ordinator in association with a Lone Parent Advisor from Jobcentre Plus three times a week.

**Lisson Grove Health Centre 1-3pm Tuesday:** This session is timed to coincide with the baby clinic. It was originally held on a Thursday morning but numbers seen were dependant on who was waiting to see the doctor. Once the session was moved to its current timing the numbers of target parents seeking advice increased significantly.

**Church Street Neighbourhood Centre. 1-3pm Wednesday:** Advice sessions are delivered in the neighbourhood centre located in the main Church Street thoroughfare and people either come in by appointment or drop-in. This session has been found to be useful for feeding into the Library session, the next day, where on-line job searches can be undertaken.

**Church Street Library (on-line)** 1-3pm Thursday: This was the first employment drop-in established in the summer of 2002. At the library, advisors are to talk to parents in the children's section of the library and link into Jobcentre Plus website and arrange interviews on the spot.

## REACH

Between January and December 03 ninety eight (98) contacts for the drop-in sessions were recorded on the Sure Start database. That is a total of 62 Sure Start eligible parents as some parents used the service more than once

From April, advisors attending the drop in sessions will be as follows:

**Tuesday session:** It is planned that the Employability Co-ordinator, and Sure Start Childcare Development Worker who will offer specialist advice on those interested in becoming a registered childminder;

**Wednesday session:** Employability Co-ordinator and Lone Parent Advisor;

**Thursday session:** Employability Co-ordinator, Lone Parent Advisor weekly and representative from the Children's Information Services, every two weeks.

## Outreach Team Benefit Advice

A benefits advice service is run by one of the Bengali speaking outreach team worker every Wednesday morning at the teams Portman Centre office. Initially, six appointment sessions were made available during the morning and was later revised to three when it was found that more time was needed to address enquiries being made.

It is intended that the benefits advice session should be linked more closely with Training & Employment Advice through the Employability Co-ordinator's drop-in sessions.

## The Parents Forum and Representation on the Sure Start Board

The outreach team plays a central role in bringing parents together as a Parents Forum to discuss issues of local concern and providing a platform through which they might have a strong voice in helping the Sure Start board understand what is working well and what further developments or changes are required.

At present there are fifteen (15) parents on the core Parents Forum committee, which meets monthly. The forum is planning wider meetings each quarter to promote a wider involvement.

The Parents Forum provides an environment where parents can meet other parents, learn about working as a team, organise ideas and find ways of recording the things that are important to local people. Being part of the Parents Forum has been shown to be a good way to build confidence and skills, all of which are applicable to the wider world of work experience or employment. During October and November 03 parent representatives were part of a four module development programme looking at how meetings work and personal contributions. This programme was led by an outside consultant with expertise in this area and topics included chairing a meeting, taking minutes of discussions and being an effective contributor.

There are four (4) parent representatives on the Sure Start Partnership Board and there are plans to extend the number to six (6) now that there is regular feedback on the board agenda from the Parents Forum.

### **Parents Supporting Parents**

Loneliness, social isolation, poor self image and esteem whilst determinants of ill-health are also indicators of a need to invest in building stronger informal supports and networks. This does not necessarily imply the delivery of increased professional services. The Church Street programme recognises that parents are the first teachers of their children and has worked hard to provide many opportunities for parents for meet together and develop local networks. The value parents attach to such opportunities has been apparent in feedback from both the 2002 and 2003 Sure Start community surveys with parents asking for more social events and occasions involving the whole family.

### **Parents and Programme Evaluation**

In May 2003 and April 2004 eighteen (18) Sure Start parents attended a course to develop local evaluation skills. Their job was to refine a questionnaire to be used in surveying the local community in order to find out if parents considered local services had improved in the past 12 months and whether they had made a difference to children and families. Parents undertook the survey in pairs at target community sites and via on-the spot approaches at nurseries and outdoor play areas.

All parents completing the course received a certificate of achievement and a personal testimonial that could be referenced on their CV or held in their portfolio. Feedback from

parents has been very positive with many parents reporting an increase in feelings of confidence and self esteem. The survey is to be repeated in 2004 and once again will be reported as part of the sure start annual review.

### **Partnership with Jobcentre Plus**

The Employability Co-ordinator has given two presentations to the front line staff within Marylebone District Jobcentre based at Lisson Grove. Approximately fifty (50) staff were given details about local training and employment opportunities that have been developed by the Employability Co-ordinator. Complex partnership work has taken place with Westminster Adult Education Service, SureStart, Westminster Primary Care Trust and JobcentrePlus in order to establish two pilot projects that involve training and work experience through the New Deal for Lone Parents funding. It is intended to offer the successful working model to Social Services, which will place 24 Lone Parents into paid employment from September 2004.

There have been some strong working relationships made with individuals and managers within JobcentrePlus, particularly with the Childcare Partnership Manager, District Partnership Manager, Lone Parent Manager and Lone Parent Advisors.

The Sure Start board have explored the possibility of a supporting a child friendly area in the Jobcentre and the Parents Forum are discussing this. Jobcentre Plus themselves are exploring the viability and suitability of such a development with their Estate Department and will feedback to Sure Start in due course.

### **(B) Local Strategies: Support Adult and Family Learning**

The Employability Co-ordinator undertook a community survey shortly after taking up post to establish what additional adult education support or provision was wanted. Survey findings revealed a significant demand for additional ESOL classes and evidence that language barriers created difficulties for parents in many aspects of everyday life. The survey also revealed the need for a co-ordinated approach to child-care to enable parents to take up adult education classes in the knowledge that their children were close by, safe and happy.

### **ESOL**

38.2 % of the Church Street population belong to ethnic minority communities and it is estimated that over 30 languages are spoken.

English Language courses are provided by WAES and are supported with a crèche in approximately half of the classes. 28 ESOL classes are delivered each week in the Sure Start Church Street area. Progression routes are available to support beginners through to Conversation English, Given the number of students taking advantage of classes in the area, it is not currently possible to track individual students progression.

English Language has been embedded into some classes such as Sewing, this will help to increase the work prospects particularly of individuals from the Bangladeshi community by enabling them to also apply for work in English speaking companies and converse with their children in English.

98 students attended ESOL classes between January and December 2003.

### Personal Development Classes

Thirty-one (31) parents attended four (4) personal development classes between January and December 2003. The majority of parents attended more than one course as can be seen below:

1 class attended	11
2 classes attended	7
3 classes attended	11
4 classes attended	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

The courses were:

Stress Management  
 Writing skills, including preparing your CV, producing business letters and creative writing  
 Listening skills and personal communication  
 Assertiveness skills

Some parents who attended the writing skills course went on to use these skills in preparing their CV's for the NVQ in Administrative Skills course discussed in section (C).

Classes are widely advertised within the local community at the Church Street Library and Lisson Grove Health Centre in poster format and leaflets. Forward notice of planned courses are also promoted by word of mouth by previous course participants and by mail

shots to parents on the Outreach Team database. Sure Start crèche places for children over 4 months are commissioned from the Church Street Children's Centre located next door to Lisson Grove Health Centre. The Sure Start Child Care Development Worker (in partnership with colleagues) has developed a number of local policies to facilitate parent access to the range of services on offer. This arrangement demonstrates many of the advantages to adopting a multi-agency approach to partnership working. Crèche places are booked in advance with a requirement that new children receive 3 'settling in' visits to ensure parents and children are familiar with both staff and environment. A nominated member of the outreach team is responsible for making sure that crèche booking are made, for being present when children arrive and enrolment of children both in and out. The sure start worker acts as a bridge between the crèche and the parents ensuring that things run smoothly and those parents are informed if needed to return to their children at any time.

Evaluation of classes delivered in 2002 revealed that small groups, discussions and role plays appear to have helped parents to get to know each other and build local contacts. Many parents made a particular point of recording that they enjoyed the courses and that learning had been fun.

"I enjoy very much"

"I will stop blaming others"

**"I felt that I am belonging to the group when I discussed my situation"**

**"Fun at the same time"**

**As a result of attending and meeting new people a significant number of participants recorded an increase in feelings of self worth and confidence in their abilities, self-presentation, and dealing with others.**

"I feel more happy and confident after this course"

"It has made me a stronger person"

"It has helped me deal with situations differently and with more confidence"

"It gave me confidence to deal with my own problems"

Participants looked forward to talking together, practising their English and learning new words. Members would help each other by taking time to explain the meaning of unfamiliar words. This seems to have helped build positive group dynamics and support individuals in extending the range of their English vocabulary.

**"I am improving my English and my confidence" "It is help my speaking English"**

**[I am] "Learning a new vocabulary"**

Comments concerning skills being learnt on the course suggest that a number of participants recognised the importance of practising what they had learnt at home and putting “theory into practice”.

***“It may be a long process but I am already changing my way of thinking and behaviour”***

***“I will take a more assertive role in decision making within my family”***

***“I found the course very useful and am trying to use assertiveness in my day to day living”***

Having an initial positive experience in the class had led some participants to think about other areas of personal development.

***“I feel that I should do more courses like this, maybe anger management and parenting courses”***

***“I have noticed that I may need more help in other areas relating to behaviour and self esteem”***

and further opportunities for learning.

***“I would like the course to continue”***

***“It would be helpful to follow-on”***

## **IT Training**

There are IT classes at Church Street Library and 1stStep.com on the Lisson Green Estate, operated by WAES. The library and 1stStep are UK Online centres and offer taster and additional sessions to people wanting to try using a computer before joining a class.

Sure Start has made a financial contribution to the computer suite at the Portman Early Childhood Centre. The purchase of an Interactive White Board will enable “Family Learning” to take place with children and their parents.

The maintenance and installation was originally carried out by City of Westminster Council but the Employability Co-ordinator intends to move the maintenance over to WAES control to speed up the resolution of IT problems.

## **Literacy Skills in the Library**

A “Read with your child” class helps parents to develop basic literacy and language skills in an informal setting. Parents attending are from MBS drop- in, and the Sure Start Literacy Development Worker contributes alongside WAES..

## **(C) Local Strategies: Support into Paid Employment**

### **Sure Start Employees**

The Church Street programme currently employs five (5) local parents who work part-time. They work for the Outreach Team, Toy Library and Marylebone Bangladeshi Society under 5s service at the Portman Centre. These parents bring local knowledge of the area, speak some of the local languages and understanding of what the important issues are for parents of young children living in the Church Street Ward. The appointment of local parents has been regarded as important because it gives a strong message to the community concerning the valuable contribution parents make to the programme and the possibilities for local leadership in some of its key services.

### **National Vocational Qualifications Linked to Employment**

16 parents are currently studying for a National Vocational Qualification in office administration level 2. 12 of these parents have young children under 4 years and live in the Church Street area. This project arose from discussions with Westminster Primary Care Trust (PCT) who wanted to look at offering job opportunities to local people. The Employability Co-ordinator **was** added to the PCT mailing list of job vacancies in order that they could be promoted within the local community via employment drop- in sessions.

Meetings were then held with the PCT head of training to discuss their need for administrative and clerical staff. It was agreed that two pilot projects would operate simultaneously.

1. The New Deal 18-24 people would work on a 6 month contract with the PCT whilst completing their NVQ leading to a guaranteed interview for permanent work;
2. The Sure Start group would commence training supported with child-care and upon completion of NVQ would be offered guaranteed interviews.

Both projects were due to commence in September 2003, however, the jobcentre New Deal 18-24 training element of the combined project stalled due to funding. By the end of December the Employability Co-ordinator made the decision to move the project over to **New Deal Lone Parents** and thus secure a new funding stream for a priority group and offered the remaining places to Sure Start parents

The Sure Start group started their NVQ training as planned in September with 8 parents. Sure Start in partnership with WAES provided free child-care. This involved crèche and childminders, some of whom had completed the joint WAES/Sure Start childminding practice course.

The New Deal Lone Parent group started in January 04 with a total of 8 participants, two of whom were the original New Deal 18-24 recruits. As recipients of Working Family Tax Credits individuals are enabled to take ownership of their childcare.

Both groups conclude their NVQ training in June 2004. At present, 6 participants from the first group are in paid employment, with two in work placements but moving to employment in the near future. From the second group two parents have gained employment already, with the remainder in work placements within the PCT.

Plans are in place to extend the New Deal Lone parent NVQ model. It is proposed that 3 NVQ courses commence in September 2004. One course in administration at level 2 ,with a view to placement of 8 students within Westminster Social Services. A second course to run at level 3 with 8 placements into Westminster PCT and a third course in Health and Social Care for 8 students shared between Westminster Social Services and Westminster PCT. These placements are under negotiation with agreements sought for a minimum of 6 months paid employment for participants leading to a guaranteed interview for permanent posts. It is likely that the Health & Social Care course will be operated by City of Westminster College and the Administration course will remain with WAES.

## **Childminding Recruitment**

The Sure Start Child Care Development Worker took up post in February 2002. Her appointment coincided with that of the Employability Co-ordinator.

The post -holders brief is to promote the recruitment and retention of childminders in the Sure Start area. This task is to be achieved in partnership with voluntary and statutory groups, the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership and Early Years section of the Education Department.

As an approved tutor for the National Association of Childminders the postholder is able to deliver the Introducing Childminding Practice course (ICP) that is a pre-requisite for registration for all childminders. It is a Cache accredited course that forms the first part of the Certificate in Childminding, a level 3 qualification that is nationally recognised. The course is linked to the National Standards for Childminding and reinforces good practice guidelines that childminders must adhere to if their registration is to be successful. WAES have been instrumental in setting up the courses and enabling the Child Care Development Worker to attend the 10 week City and Guilds 7307 Teaching Adults Course in order that she meet the new Government requirements of teaching adults.

The following childminding courses have run since February 2002.

Date Course Held	Total Number of Prospective Childminders	No. Non Sure Start Parents recruited	No. of Childminders Registering
Sept – Nov 2002	12	1	7
Sept – Dec 2002	8	1	4
May – July 2003	16	8	14
Nov- Dec 2003	15	3	9

As a result of work undertaken to date:

38 prospective childminders completed the Introducing Childminding Practice course  
 6 Sure Start participants did not complete the course  
 15 Childminders have been registered in the Sure Start area.

Nine participants completed the first course that ran for 8 weeks at Lisson Grove Health Centre and eight went on to submit an assignment for Cashe accreditation.

The second group was recruited from the Bengali community and the course ran for 11 weeks, allowing extra time for translation that was provided by the Marylebone Bangladeshi society (MBS). The training took place at the Portman Early Childhood Centre with the MBS providing a creche adjacent to the training room. Study sessions with a translator have been set up in association with WAES for those who wish to complete the Cache assignment.

The waiting time for Ofsted registration after finishing the course was at least 6 months for the 2001-2003 period. This was a transition period from the local authority to Ofsted and it is reported that things have significantly improved over the last few months.

A number of new childminders have worked in local crèche provision at the Portman Early Childhood Centre, Fourth Feathers Youth & Community Centre, Lisson Grove Health Centre and Lisson Green Day Nursery to support Sure Start classes. Some childminders combine this work with their own part time childminding.

The Childminding Recruitment Worker runs a drop-in session for childminders each week on a Wednesday from 9.30am-12noon at the Portman Early Childhood Centre. 7 regular minders attend but this number can vary upwards. Parents are encouraged to come along and talk to childminders if they are looking for childcare or thinking about wanting to register as a childminder themselves.

### **Increases in Creche Provision for Classes**

A great deal of time was spent during the first year establishing crèche provision that would support learners whilst in a WAES or Sure Start class. This involved close negotiations with the WAES Childcare Manager, WAES Student Services Director, Sure Start Nursery Nurse and Sure Start Childcare Development Worker to establish a co-ordinated and manageable facility at several locations. Three teams of childcare workers currently operate the crèche to support WAES and Sure Start learning in Church Street Ward.

### **Work Preparation Course**

This is a collaboration between several organisations to provide a “polishing” for students, ready for work. The students will be provided by Sure Start / WAES, City of Westminster College & JobcentrePlus. The initial concept is to use funds from LDA (Learning for Disadvantaged Areas) through City of Westminster College, where students have completed at least 30 hours of training. The work preparation would then tag onto the end of this training and provide an opportunity to produce a CV and have a mentor providing advice on interview skills etc. It is proposed that North Kensington Centre for Opportunities will deliver a course over 2 weeks at the end of existing classes and one spread over 6 weeks through the summer to allow Sure Start parents good childcare at the Church Street Children’s Centre, whilst they attend class. Marks & Spencers have confirmed a £20,000 contribution to the cost of this project.

#### **TARGET GROUPS FOR WORK PREPARATION ARE:**

<b>Sure Start:</b>	Parents, carers, grandparents of children under 4 years in WAES, ESOL classes with crèche
<b>WAES:</b>	Post 16 adults

<b>JobcentrePlus</b>	All adults, specifically NewDeal Lone parents studying ESOL with creche through WAES
City of Westminster College	16-19 year olds

## Discussion

Sure Start has made considerable progress in developing a range of employability initiatives over the past two years. The appointment of the programme's Employability Co-ordinator and Childcare Development Worker has been central to many of the advances made. The whole system approach by sure start, including the important role of the outreach team and partnership working with community partners, many of whom supported the establishment of the post, all appear to be significant helping factors that have contributed to the achievements made to date.

The Employability Co-ordinator came to the job with a background in organising adult learning and teaching. However, the post demands a broad range of skills from negotiation, building alliances and delivery of multiple projects within a complex environment of regeneration initiatives and community services. The post holder has the ability to be able to project manage, and build relationships at all levels, including one to one work with families, and this has been a significant factor in the success of this new and untested role.

Initially based at the WAES offices at Amberley Road outside of the Church Street area brought both advantages and challenges to the post holder. Firstly, it enabled the post holder to build good working relationships with the WAES team and understand how learning programmes are planned, developed and delivered. This background underpinned all later work and brought benefits in terms of identifying local needs and priorities emerging from the grass roots in Church Street and translating these into concrete plans with reduced need for time consuming and costly lead in times. An example of this was the way in which the Employability Co-ordinator helped the Childcare Literacy Worker to set up a 'Read With Your Child' programme with the WAES with minimum delay and an agreed start date.

Despite hard work to develop a local presence at drop-in sessions and local resources such as the library and health centre the Employability Co-ordinator still felt geographically distanced without a solid 'foot hold' in the local community. A move to Lisson Grove Health Centre alongside the Sure Start team has been successful in achieving a more visible presence and stronger local contacts as a result of seeing people more frequently.

Phase 1 of the Employability Co-ordinators work concerned itself primarily with the development of adult education opportunities in the Church Street area and signposting of

resources. Indeed, the post holders' contract specified a number of hours each week for direct training input. It became evident after a period of time that it would have been easy to have fallen into the trap of the post being seen as simply an additional resource for planning and delivering adult education for Church Street rather than co-ordinating, signposting and re-shaping existing provision based on a much wider remit of employability and employment. Mid course corrections to the activities and services provided were made after the first year of operation.

The Training and Employment Task Group was up and running when the Employability Co-ordinator started work. Being part of this group enabled the Employability Co-ordinator to build good working relationships with people already making a contribution to training and employment for residents of Church Street. Later in 2002 the group was re-shaped with a core membership and stronger focus. The group has been significant in that members have collaborated to look at what can be achieved by tapping various funding streams and looking at where each partner can make a contribution to Church Street residents overall, not necessarily just their own target group. An example of this is the work preparation course that is being planned that will look at progression routes for those who want to move from training into employment.

Figures from the Sure Start database confirm that approximately 27% of Sure Start parents undertook some form of basic skills training in the area between January and December 2003. This includes ESOL, IT, Literacy and personal development classes. The data also reveals that the majority of parents attended more than one course for the same period.

Much anecdotal evidence of progression through training, education and new opportunities resulting from Sure Start have been reported as part of this evaluation. The Outreach Team have video vignettes of parents talking about their experiences and how various parts of the Sure Start programme have knitted together. Similarly, the Childcare Development Worker and Employability Co-ordinator have a number of stories where parents facing seemingly huge obstacles have taken control of their lives and even surprised themselves at how far they have come. It would have been helpful to have been able to chart progression through adult education classes in a more systematic way. For example the numbers of parents who have progressed from English language as beginners to more advanced or Conversational English or the number of people trying computers for the first time and progressing to word processing or use of the internet. This evaluation has not been able to gauge how many people have progressed from basic to more advanced courses since this information is not collected and recorded on the Sure Start database. It might be worthwhile exploring how this information might be gathered from the providers of adult education or recorded as part of the monthly monitoring returns for future analysis.

An approach that tests the helpfulness of developing personal learning plans with individual parents might be worth exploring. This would assist parents to clarify their own learning goals and possible learning routes that would best assist them. It is acknowledged that this would take time to set up but it would help ensure that learning opportunities were best tailored to parents and their individual circumstances. At present, notwithstanding the work of the Outreach and the wider Sure Start Team, there is a great deal of input to parents via group learning. A move towards more tailored coaching and reviewing of progression through the various services on offer would be worth exploring further.

A key achievement of the Employability Co-ordinator has been the securing of more crèche places to allow parents to attend training. Important factors for parents have been that their children are well looked after, safe and close by.

2003 research by the Mayor of London found that lack of childcare was a significant factor in preventing women from entering training and work within the report is reflected a stark contrast between the numbers of men and women in the job market as reported by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

When the Employability Co-ordinator took up post in February 2002 there were 2 crèche centres supporting 6 WAES classes. There are currently 26, two hour crèche sessions per week in the Church Street area, supporting 54 classes (see appendix 1). Progress in this area reflects an increased awareness of the importance of childcare that cannot be divorced from the provision of good quality training and development. Programmes like Sure Start can offer services to parents and invest significant resources but without timely and appropriate child care facilities that convey friendliness and confidence all of this is to no avail. The Sure Start model has increasingly aimed to *facilitate access* to opportunities rather than simply *invite participation*.

There has been an increase in the number of crèche places for the under 3s in the Sure Start area to support classes at the Portman Early Childhood Centre, the Church Street Children's Centre and the Fourth Feathers Youth & Community Centre. Respite places have also been arranged with local childminders. Lisson Green Day Nursery continues to offer nine (9) places for children under 2 years and six (6) of these are Sure Start funded. The Portman Early Childhood Centre is now taking children under 3 years on both a full and part time basis but this is not exclusively from the Sure Start area. It is true to say that most crèche places in the area are sessional to comply with the Ofsted 2 hour rule and that this is not sufficient for parents who wish regular full time care to enter or return to work. It is also a model that does not best meet the needs of children or Childcare Workers in that children may not experience the continuity they need to thrive.

The Sure Start Childcare Development Worker has made considerable strides in the recruitment and retention of childminders within the Church Street area. One of the important messages to come from this work is that childminders need considerable support and that this requires significant resourcing.

Experience to date shows that prospective childminders with English as a second language need extra support with registration and that for some there is a need for basic skills training/ESOL before taking forward any plans to train as a registered child minder.

Research seems to be indicating that children under 2 years thrive in a home based setting with appropriately trained childminders. However, for many parents the nursery is still the first choice. New childminders sometimes need extra support to market themselves with parent groups about the value of childminding, the training they have received and the stringent registration process and by implication the monitoring of the children in their care. It is interesting to note that despite feedback about the need for additional promotion and marketing of childminders that no one in the Sure Start area applied for a sustainability grant from the local authority. It is understood from the Childcare Recruitment Worker that the scheme has been abandoned this year due to poor take up and that monies have been allocated elsewhere.

The Employability Co-ordinator has contributed to building an understanding and bridging of the work of Sure Start and its community partners. There have been examples of a number of initiatives being delivered that could not have been delivered by just one partner in isolation or where this would have been a more costly option. The mainstreaming of some Sure Start adult education classes into WAES has been successful and has meant that (a) more is being delivered in Church Street than before (b) classes have become embedded into the main WAES structures and are advertised and promoted accordingly (c) all partners are able to find ways of meeting their own local targets around education and employability.

The mainstreaming of services provided by Sure Start programmes is starting to generate some interesting debates. A challenge seems to involve the extent to which Sure Start is able to act as change agent within its allied organisations. This does not just involve the delivery of services but the systems, structures and policies that shape the way organisations think about their roles and how best to deliver their services.

The mainstreaming of classes provided by Church Street Sure Start into WAES is underway. But considerable communication needs to happen to ensure a firm footing for the gains made to date. We know already that some classes have been successfully mainstreamed, however, we also know that parents with young children cannot enrol for classes in Church Street, may rely on the intervention and support of the outreach team and

other familiar sources of help and may have difficulties with English and/or basic skills that create barriers to form filling and applications. Some questions might include, how is WAES going to build on its local networks to continue facilitating participation, given that Sure Start has made good progress in engaging the hard to reach groups? Will the presence of unfamiliar tutors deter some parents from enrolling and sticking with their classes when things get tough? What new relationships need to be developed locally to ensure that community building and access to education continues for those that constitute the hardest to reach groups but who may derive the greatest benefits? An away day is planned with community partners to look at these issues and learn from experiences to date.

In the last 18 months the employability initiatives developed by Sure Start have moved towards a second phase of work. This second stage approach builds on the work that has taken place to extend and develop adult education and facilitate direct support for parents into work placements or employment.

The planning and implementation of the NVQ in administration has been an exciting development and early indications show it is successful with potential application elsewhere. In the same way the planned work preparation courses provide good evidence of co-operation between services and the extent of practical collaboration on the ground.

The benefits noted above are interesting because increased interagency collaboration is allowing the development of new ideas that only become possible where there are shared goals but that the individual interests of each partner are understood and met. Projects being developed in Church Street have allowed community partners to work more successfully towards their own target groups whether they be lone parents, people with gaps in basic skills or parents with young children.

## **Recommendations**

1. To explore the introduction of personal learning plans with individual parents to help them establish personal goals and best ways of meeting their own learning needs. This will also ensure progression between courses;
2. To make further contacts with local employers and assess the viability of extending the NVQ training approach to the commercial sector itself;
3. To continue to improve and develop sessional childcare for children in the Sure Start area whilst working with colleagues to press for greater full time childcare in Church Street. Without this all endeavours to support parents into work are severely weakened;

4. To review the additional help newly registered childminders need with marketing their services to local parents, particularly for those with children under 2 years;
5. To link the benefits advice session provided by the Outreach team more closely with the Training and Employment advice given at local drop-in sessions;
6. To further develop the existing monitoring systems to ensure that students progression and outcomes can be more readily measured.

## Appendice 1

### **Fourth Feathers Youth & Community Centre**

Monday 10-12 English Language (Literacy level 1) - with crèche  
 Monday 10-12 English Language (Literacy level 2) - with crèche  
 Monday 1-3pm English Language Beginners  
 Tuesday 10-12 English Language (Literacy level 1) - with crèche  
 Tuesday 10-12 English Language (Literacy level 2) - with crèche  
 Tuesday 1-3pm English Language Beginners  
 Tuesday 1-3pm NVQ Administration Level 2 - with crèche  
 Tuesday 1-3pm Sewing with ESOL - with crèche  
 Wednesday 10-12 English Language (Literacy level 1) - with crèche  
 Wednesday 10-12 English Language Beginners - with crèche  
 Wednesday 1-3pm English Language Beginners  
 Wednesday 1-3pm English Language Lower Intermediate  
 Wednesday 1-3pm Raising Boys/Raising Girls (TBC - September)  
 Thursday 10-12 English Language Beginners - with crèche  
 Thursday 10-12 English Language (Literacy level 2) - with crèche  
 Thursday 1-3pm English Language Lower Intermediate  
 Thursday 1-3pm Sewing with ESOL  
 Thursday 1-3pm Communication Skills – with crèche  
 Friday 10-12 English Language Beginners - with crèche  
 Friday 1-3pm English Language Lower Intermediate  
 Friday 1-3pm NVQ Administration Level 2 - with crèche (TBC)

### **Portman Early Childhood Centre**

Monday 9.30-11am English Language Pre-Intermediate – with crèche  
 Monday 11.30-1pm English Language Intermediate – with crèche  
 Monday 2-3.30pm English Language Beginners – with crèche  
 Monday 2-3.30pm Basic Skills Literacy – with crèche  
 Tuesday 9.30-11am English Language Pre-Intermediate – with crèche

Tuesday 11.30-1pm English Language Intermediate – with crèche  
Tuesday 1-3pm NVQ Administration – with crèche (TBC)  
Tuesday 2-3.30pm English Language Beginners – with crèche  
Tuesday 2-3.30pm Beginners Computers – with crèche  
Wednesday 1-2.30pm English Conversation – with crèche  
Wednesday 1-3pm NVQ Administration – with creche  
Wednesday 2-3.30pm Childminders Drop-in – with crèche (TBC)  
Thursday 1-3pm Wordprocessing – with crèche  
Friday 10am-3pm NVQ Health & Social Care  
Friday 1-3pm Internet & Email – with crèche

### **Church Street Library**

Monday 10-12.30 Introduction to Wordprocessing  
Monday 1-3.30pm Internet & Email  
Monday 4-5pm Open Session  
Monday 5-7pm Open Session  
Tuesday 10-12.30 Introduction to Internet & Email (SilverSurfer)  
Tuesday 1-3.30pm Introduction to Computers  
Wednesday 10-12.30pm Introduction to Computers  
Wednesday 1-3.30pm Introduction to Computers (over 60's)  
Wednesday 4-5pm Open Session  
Wednesday 5-7pm Open Session  
Thursday 10-12.30 Introduction to Computers  
Thursday 1-3.30pm Introduction to Wordprocessing  
Thursday 4-5pm Open Session  
Thursday 5-7pm Open Session  
Friday 10-12.30pm Internet & Email  
Friday 1-3.30pm Open Session  
Friday 4-5pm Open Session  
Saturday 10-2pm Open Session

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