

THE EXPERIENCES OF PARENT
RESEARCHERS:
NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE
SURE START

A report on the experiences of the parent researchers involved
in the Community Consultation for North East Derbyshire Sure
Start



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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the findings of an evaluative study of the experiences of parent researchers undertaking a community consultation in North East Derbyshire Sure Start. The consultation itself was developed to provide insight into the early impact of the programme and inform Sure Start programme expansion. A group of local parents, recruited to Sure Start, trained in survey methods and given expert support carried out the consultation. They worked together to design a questionnaire, developing it from an initial brief of requirements from the Sure Start team. They took the questionnaire to 62 expectant mothers and parents of children under a year living in the Sure Start area and completed the questionnaire with them. They then analysed the information from the questionnaires and wrote up the results, their conclusions and recommendations. A report of their findings has now been submitted to the North East Derbyshire Sure Start team.

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The community consultation project was, like many Sure Start projects, multi-faceted and experimental. It had three broad aims:

1. To recruit a group of local parents who would act as researchers, but would also share information about Sure Start services with other parents in the area
2. To support those researchers to find out about the views and experiences of parents/carers living in the North East Derbyshire Sure Start area
3. To find out what the experience of becoming a parent researcher had meant for those who undertook the role

This report focuses on the third of these aims, the experiences of the parent researchers themselves.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

The project began with a desire from the North East Derbyshire Sure Start team to find out more about the needs of local parents. An initial informal process of needs assessment had been undertaken prior to the establishment of the Sure Start, but the team wanted to develop a more systematic approach.

In line with the philosophy of Sure Start it was decided from the outset that local people should be involved at every stage of the process. It was therefore decided that local parents should be involved in all aspects of the consultation. In order to ensure that this was done ethically and without exploitation, both the Sure Start programme manager and the University research facilitator reviewed the experiences of other Sure Start programmes that had undertaken

similar work and consulted the advice offered by the national team¹. A small literature review was also undertaken. The Sure Start board, which includes local parents, were involved in the development of plans at all stages.

It was decided that the parents taking part should be employed, rather than work as volunteers. However, this did pose some difficulties, both for the parents in relation to possible difficulties with benefit payments and for Sure Start who, because they did not want to determine too much in advance, were unsure how many hours over what time scale would be necessary to complete the work. However, these difficulties were overcome by employing the researchers as 'bank' staff. This meant the hours and length of contract could be flexible and that the researchers employed could remain available for work with Sure Start after completion of the programme itself. As for all North East Derbyshire Sure Start staff the researchers would be employed formally by the lead agency; Derbyshire County Council (education).

PARTNER AGENCIES INVOLVED

The programme was developed through the co-operative efforts of workers from a number of agencies.

North East Derbyshire Sure Start

Sure Start staff and board were responsible for developing the original idea for the consultation and managing the programme from commencement to completion. George Wachlarz was responsible for supporting the researchers and day-to-day management of the programme.

University of Sheffield

Ann Rowe, a research facilitator from the Institute of General Practice and Primary Care, School of Health and Related Research (SchARR) was recruited in the early stages of the programme to provide academic support to the process and work with the parent researchers to develop and run the consultation process. Her colleague, Julie Foers, undertook the statistical analysis.

Adult Community Education, Lifelong Learning, Derbyshire County Council

Claire Austin, from the Adult Education, Lifelong Learning team, designed and delivered an Open College Network level 2 accredited course 'A Community Survey' (unit code; PN12QQ018) to the parent researchers.

Early Years Department, Derbyshire County Council

Expertise from the early years department was vital in the development of the recruitment process for the parent researchers.

¹ Brodie, I (2003) 'The Involvement of parents and Carers in Sure Start local evaluations' National Evaluation of Sure Start.

RECRUITMENT

The parent researcher posts were advertised in a variety of locations and formats including posting within Derbyshire County Council vacancy bulletins and Sure Start community briefings. Local mothers attending Sure Start activities were also informed of the posts and encouraged to apply.

As for all other NE Derbyshire Sure Start posts, job descriptions and person specifications were drawn up and applicants were asked to complete an application form. Applicants were invited to interviews, which were kept as informal as possible. As a result of this process all fifteen applicants who were able to take up the position were recruited.

Characteristics of the researchers

- All the researchers were women. Most were mothers of pre-school or primary school aged children, although a number had older and adult children.
- Previous educational qualifications varied widely from none at all, through certified courses, NVQs and GCSEs to degree level.
- Previous employment was likewise very diverse, including teaching in school and FE colleges, office, shop and factory work, caring roles with adults and children, hairdressing and dental assistant roles. Six of the fifteen were already in other employment part time, mostly in administrative or caring roles.
- Of those not working, the time since their last employment varied from 6 months to 18 years.
- 7 of the 15 researchers had some previous experience of survey work. Of these 2 had experience as part of a degree programme, 4 had been involved with audit or customer/client satisfaction enquiries as part of current or previous jobs and one had been employed as an interviewer for a market research company.

This range of previous experience and education provided a rich resource for the project.

THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROJECT CONTENT

There were 4 parts to the consultation project

1. Learning programme
2. Development of the questionnaire
3. Collection of community consultation data
4. Analysis of data and report writing

LEARNING PROGRAMME

Formal content for the OCN qualification

The content of the taught learning programme was as follows;

<u>Session</u> <u>(3 hours)</u>	<u>Topics</u>
1	Listening skills (provided by Adult Community Education, Basic skills tutors)
2	Writing skills(provided by Adult Community Education, Basic skills tutors)
3	Understanding different research methods
4	Questionnaire design. Piloting
5	Confidentiality. Child protection
6	Equal opportunities. Personal safety
7	Developing and using questionnaires
8	Recording of evidence/data
9	Recording data and analysis of results
10	Presenting results

Additional input

- **Equal opportunities & Public safety**

As employees who would have access to children the researchers all had to provide references and were checked by the police for relevant criminal records. As part of the training the researchers discussed their responsibilities for maintaining the confidentiality of the participants in the consultation and had input from the Sure Start workers on child protection and equal opportunities.

- **Personal safety**

The researchers were encouraged to protect themselves by letting someone know how long they were expected to be out and the database numbers of the people they were going to visit (this could be checked against the Sure Start database if necessary).

- **Preparing for data collection**

As part of the final part of the preparations the researchers created a list of their worst fears, which were then discussed. The list they created is reproduced below.

What if.....(worst case scenarios)

- I feel threatened
- Child in, no adult
- Family have company
- Interviewee is drunk
- We know them
- They burst into tears
- They ask me to look after the children while they pop to the shop
- I witness a child being hit
- There are used drug needles in evidence
- We hear arguing and children crying inside the house
- The mother leaves a baby crying while she talks to me
- The person goes into her problems in too much depth
- The mother appears very depressed but unaware that she is
- The mother expresses suicidal feelings
- We only get half way through the questionnaire before we have to stop

In addition, the researchers were given the opportunity to consider how they would introduce themselves and their work; how they would discuss confidentiality and ways to enable participants to understand and complete the consent form. A 'crib sheet' was developed for the researchers to use should they 'dry up'.

Accreditation of Learning

15 of the 16 parent researchers achieved the level 2 qualification (the other having decided not to submit her portfolio of evidence).

Continuation of learning

Advice and guidance staff from Derbyshire County Council's Adult Community Education team met with the parent researchers to inform them of further learning opportunities. This resulted in a number of them taking up further courses and others becoming trained as 'Additional Learner Support' workers for the college

DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was developed as a part of the learning programme. Its development took more time than anticipated and led to the extension of the programme. The researchers were given a list of topic areas for the community consultation by the SS staff and were invited to add areas they felt should be covered. They then devised and tried out forms of words for the questions amongst themselves and family members. The questionnaire grew from this process until a final form was reached.

COLLECTION OF DATA

The parent researchers were each given four or five interviews to undertake. Each also had to explain and complete a consent form with the research participant. They were given 4 weeks to complete the interviews. Unfortunately, the dates coincided with the February half term, so cutting short the time available. However, the researchers made huge efforts and were able to obtain a 66% uptake within the timescales given. During this data collection phase the researchers were supported by:

- Telephone access to a SS worker at all times
- An informal meeting to share experiences
- Active telephone support at intervals by the SS worker

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND REPORT WRITING

The data collected by the parent researchers was returned to staff at the University of Sheffield who simply collated it into a user friendly form. The data was inputted into SPSS and Excel programmes and simple frequency scores and percentages were calculated. Responses to open ended questions were collated together. These summaries together with the original questionnaire data were made available to the parent researchers.

The researchers worked together in four, 4-hour sessions to complete the analysis of the data, draw conclusions, write a report and agree recommendations. To complete this work within the short timescales available, researchers worked in 2s and 3s on different areas of the questionnaire, and indeed some met informally to continue the work (all time was paid). They were supported by the two staff from the University of Sheffield. Those with previous experience were able to assist those with less confidence and the analysis was written up, by hand or straight onto a PC, as it was undertaken. A number of the researchers were familiar with Excel and were able to create graphs or charts themselves, others were able to work with colleagues or identify their requirements to the University staff.

During this process many of the key issues of research were raised e.g. the difficulty of citing a particular case for fear that the person may be identifiable, the impression gained from interviews conducted personally not coinciding with majority findings overall and the difficulty posed by attempting to draw conclusions from small numbers. These were debated and guidance offered by the University staff. In the last session the key findings from each area were shared and debated, with recommendations arising from the discussion.

The University staff were responsible for the final compilation of the report. This was mostly an editing process to give the report a structure and coherence, leaving the original work by the parent researchers intact. The report was then returned to all the researchers for their comments and approval before sending back to Sure Start.

THE RESEARCHERS' EXPERIENCES

METHODS FOR EVALUATING RESEARCHERS' EXPERIENCES

Three separate methods were used to collect data that would give insight into the experiences of the researchers. The researchers were asked to:

- Complete two questionnaires, one before beginning the training and one at the end of the project (See appendices 4 & 5).
- Take part in a recorded focus group, undertaken immediately after the completion of the data analysis phase of the consultation.
- Complete a diary, recording their experiences of the data collection phase of the work.

Ethical Issues

Participation in the study was voluntary. Individuals were informed of their right to withdraw from the study and/or retract consent at any stage (see appendices 1, 2 & 3) Permission to record was requested for the focus group. Recorded data was managed safely at all times. The personal details of interviewees were separated from the questionnaires, which contained only an ID number. The database linking ID with research participant was securely maintained by the University administrator.

Each participant was informed that the research findings would not identify individual comments by name. However participants were made aware that, due to small numbers, it was not possible to assure anonymity in any reports arising from the research. Because of this issue, all respondents were given the opportunity to amend or withdraw comments made during the data collection phase, prior to publication of this report. To this end each participant was sent a copy of the final report and invited to make comment or request the amendment or removal of particular sections.

A copy of the research proposal was submitted to the chair of North Derbyshire Local Health Ethics Committee who considered that it did not require NHS ethical approval.

FINDINGS

INITIAL EXPECTATIONS AND MOTIVATIONS

The initial expectations of the parent researchers were elicited from the initial questionnaire, sent to participants before they began the training programme.

Positive expectations

When asked what they were most looking forward to as a parent researcher the answers given fell into five main themes. These are listed below in order of frequency with which they were mentioned with quotes from the questionnaire.

1. Contact with new people.

(n=11)

- *"Meeting lots of people!"*
- *"meeting mothers and families"*
- *"Meeting a range of families and new parents"*

2. Giving something back

(n=4)

- *"hoping to assist people"*
- *"Having the opportunity to both listen and support parents in deciding on ways to improve both their own and their children's life chances"*
- *"Giving support to young families who have no other means of discussing concerns and problems. Making changes that give parents a means to move on"*
- *"hoping I can contribute in some small way to making life a little bit better for people who are not as lucky as I was when I was pregnant and a new mum"*

3. New opportunities for self

(n=4)

- *"broadening my career"*
- *"gaining further knowledge and experience"*
- *"learning about research work"*
- *"progressing with my research skills"*

4. Finding out about the views of local parents

(n=4)

- *"Finding out what other people in the area think about how much the area has to offer small children and their families"*
- *"meeting people and finding out their needs"*
- *"meeting parents and hearing their views on Sure Start"*
- *"gaining a better understanding of the needs and feelings of local families"*

5. Getting involved with Sure Start

(n=1)

- *"opportunity to develop Sure Start in a new area"*

Anxieties

The range of responses in this area was broader. Three people did not have any anxieties. Of the rest, the biggest concerns were;

1. Not having the necessary skills

(n=5)

- *"learning all the necessary skills to do the job well"*
- *"I worry that I won't be able to do everything that is expected of me"*
- *"presenting information"*
- *"Getting it all wrong. Looking silly. Letting Sure Start down"*
- *"Getting the paperwork right & getting confidence in computers"*

2. Not being able to gain the co-operation of interviewees

(n=3)

- *"not being accepted by a person who I have gone to see"*
- *"families not wanting to let me into their homes or not wanting to talk with me"*
- *"meeting people who don't want to co-operate"*

In addition individual people were concerned about dogs, driving, home visiting and returning to employment.

Further employment

Thirteen of the fourteen people who shared their future expectations regarding employment hoped to go on to further work. Of these, ten were hoping to work in community base child or family support work of some kind. The other three were undecided.

Further education/training

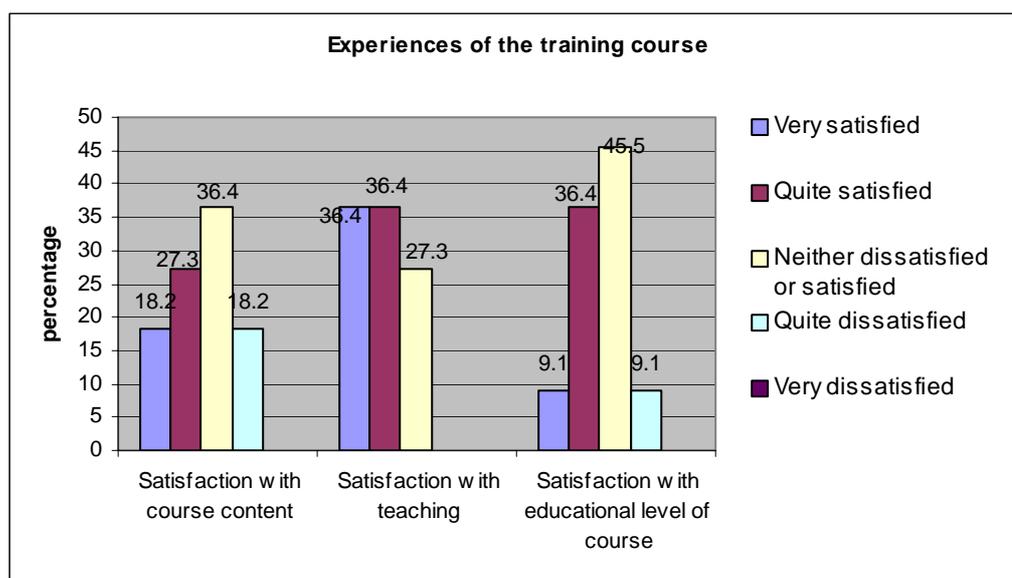
Twelve of the fourteen giving responses in this area were hoping to continue with other courses. Five of these were undecided about the courses they wanted to undertake. The others had specific courses in mind which included counselling, health and safety, first aid, child care, adult education teaching, and access.

EXPERIENCES OF THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Of the researchers who had completed the final questionnaire (n=11) most (81.8%) had learned about the role through the advertisements. Four of the eleven respondents felt that the recruitment process could have been improved, with most citing the length of time it took to arrange contracts, police checks and commence payment of wages as reasons for dissatisfaction.

EXPERIENCES OF THE TRAINING COURSE

The researchers reported experiences of the OCN course were varied and this appeared to be predominately related to their previous educational experience. The range of views on satisfaction with the course were as follows;



Course Content

Most (36.4%) were neither, dissatisfied or satisfied with the course content and some respondents (n=5) specifically commented on the fact that time could have been more effectively spent on development of the questionnaire.

"Felt there was too much emphasis on 'basic skills', needed to concentrate more on questionnaire compilation...."

"It sometimes seemed we were just meeting criteria to gain a qualification rather than dealing in depth with the questionnaire."

This balance between delivering the learning programme content required to obtain the SDO qualification and focusing on the development of the community consultation itself, was difficult to manage within the time periods allowed. The course tutor and research facilitator both agreed that the integration between the course content and the development of the research tools for the consultation should have been greater.

Educational Level

Most (81.9%) were quite satisfied or neither satisfied or dissatisfied about the educational level of the course and comments were varied, reflecting the previous experiences of the researchers.

"The level of the course was extremely basic, but I don't feel that anything more was needed to be able to perform the task that we did."

"It was at the level I would have expected for the work done."

"Although it was a good grounding, I feel it didn't really fully prepare me for the final role."

"Interesting learned things I didn't know about previously."

Teaching

Most (72.8%) were either very or quite satisfied with the teaching. Comments varied but overall respondents were positive.

"All tutors made what they had to say easy, very approachable and friendly."

"Excellent teaching, very patient and willing to let us participate in the discussions and have our say if we wanted to."

"The researcher at Sheffield University provided guidance and support rather than heavy handed teaching."

However, again there were some people who felt the level of learning was not appropriate for them:

"I didn't feel that I actually learnt anything new, but the tutor was nice and she tried to make the sessions interesting."

"Felt the teaching did not take into account our own abilities as parents."

Preparation for the role

When asked to consider how the course prepared them for the work they were expected to undertake views were mixed. 45.5% (n=5) felt the course did not prepare them, 36.4% (n=4) felt they were quite well prepared and 18.2% (n=2) felt neither prepared or unprepared. The researchers highlighted a number of areas for which they had felt unprepared:

"We weren't prepared for the amount of time and effort it took to actually secure and undertake an interview."

"I think we should have had longer mapping the questions, so that we were all happy with the final questionnaire."

"...far too little (time) was spent piloting the questionnaire..."
"It gave a good grounding for the role but I still felt 'thrown in at the deep end' when it came to making appointments and interviewing people."
"...should have been given more initial background information on Sure Start."

This final point was also made in one researcher's diary:

"I felt I didn't have enough knowledge on the SS services listed in the questions. ...I felt I should have known more to be able to explain confidently what they are all about" (diary extract)

This feedback indicates that more time should have been spent discussing and preparing for issues of access and 'real life' interviewing than was given within the programme delivered.

Accreditation

Receiving an accredited qualification for the course was of varied importance to the researchers. 45.5% (n=5) felt that accreditation was quite or very important while 54.5% (n=6) felt that accreditation was not very important or neither important nor unimportant. This variation was reflected in the comments;

"I applied for the job because I personally felt unprepared for pregnancy/parenthood and didn't want other parents to suffer as I did. The qualification was not an issue."

"I felt it was an added bonus, the experience was more important than the paper."

"Gives you confidence to go for other jobs similar and to know it was something I never thought I could do."

I applied for this job to find out more about Sure Start, local families and the best way to improve their lives - not to get a qualification."

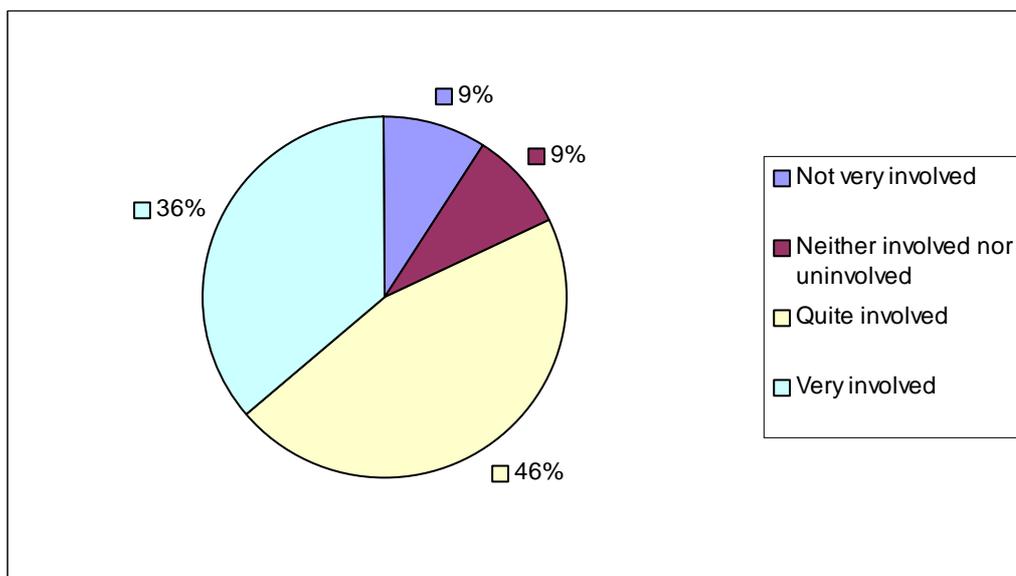
"That extra bit of confidence. I had a better feeling knowing I was qualified to do it."

"...the credits will help towards my college place."

In their preparatory work the Sure Start team and university researcher had anticipated that the accreditation of learning would be an additional benefit to the parent researchers. However, in the event, the group was quite evenly split between those who felt that it was important to them and those who did not. The emphasis of the course on completing the various elements required to gain the qualification did detract from the time available for development and piloting of the questionnaire.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

One of the aims of the programme was to involve the parent researchers in all aspects of the consultation process. One element of this was the development of the consultation questionnaire. The majority (82%) of respondents felt either quite or very involved in the development of the questionnaire.



"Not all of us agreed on some of the questions included but other views were discussed."

"We were given plenty of opportunity at all stages to say what we thought, and to object to anything we did not like."

"I felt that our input was taken seriously and our points of view taken into consideration."

"Some took a negative approach when doing the questionnaire but we were all allowed to have our own opinions."

Some negative comments were related to the fact that the researchers had been given an initial brief of their needs by the North East Derbyshire Sure Start team;

"Although as researchers we had a lot of input, I felt strongly that many things were pre-determined and we were simply being steered in the right direction."

"I sometimes felt like it had already been mapped out before."

When asked what they would have changed most respondents replied that they would have liked to spend more time developing and piloting the questionnaire. They would have welcomed more opportunities to review questionnaires from other similar projects (they were given 3 other examples of other questionnaires) as this may have helped them to make decisions about style and content. They would also have liked more coaching on interviewing techniques to help them achieve the most effective responses.

EXPERIENCES OF INTERVIEWING

Data on the researchers' experiences of interviewing has been drawn from the focus group, the researchers' diaries and the final questionnaire. The data revealed three primary themes:

- Personal impact of the work on the researchers
- Issues arising regarding the conduct of the interviews
- Impact of the work

1. PERSONAL IMPACT ON THE RESEARCHERS

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Data consisted of two types;

- Where the researchers assessed themselves as having developed new skills
- Where evidence is given of the application of specific skills in the role.

The first section relates to the researchers assessment of the acquisition of new skills. They were specifically asked on the final questionnaire about any new skills they felt they had acquired as a result of their involvement in the project. The main themes of responses are listed below in order of frequency with which they were mentioned with quotes from the questionnaires returned (n=11).

1. Listening

(n=4)

"I have learnt how to be a more sensitive listener."

"Listening to people"

"listening skills"

"Better listening skills"

2. Improved confidence

(n= 3)

"Think on my feet more and made me more confident in my ability to relate to people".

"To not be afraid to speak out - if only a simple question. I am normally quite shy and although I have been on lots of committees I cannot take over/command - not even on a temporary basis"

"Confidence in my own abilities."

Improved confidence was also raised by participants in the focus group and in the diaries;

"I felt it gave me more confidence to ask some of the questions especially some of the iffy questions if you like". (focus group)

" I feel stronger as a person, I have gone alone to visit people who know as much about me as I do about them! I have asked them some very private questions about money and health, yet they answered them all" (dairy extract)

*"I am getting more confident each time I interview and don't want to stop!"
(diary extract)*

3. communicating with a range of people

(n=2)

"I now feel I can talk to anyone about anything, money, drugs, drink, whatever"

"Communication with people I have never met"

4. research skills

(n=2)

"Interviewing skills and techniques. ...Questionnaire development skills."

"Although it's not a new skill, I have been able to reinforce the research skills that I have already learned at college. Gaining more experience in interviewing techniques is always a bonus"

Other skills which participants identified as having developed were;

5. Telephone skills

"...that gave me panic attacks because I don't like particularly phoning anybody up and I don't like answering the phone either so that was a big hurdle for me to overcome...I was really thrilled that I had actually done it" (Focus group)

"The more phoning I'm doing the more confident I feel. Although I do feel I don't know what to expect on the other side of the phone. Some have been really friendly and others seemed put out" (diary extract)

Evidence of skills in use

That the researchers needed to use many interviewing skills was evident from the comments made both in the diaries and the focus group. The following extracts give evidence of these skills in action;

- **Encouragement**

" Cos she was almost hesitant to say it, she says 'I don't think I dare say this' and I said 'no, this is your chance to speak' " (focus group)

"Saying about a hospital or something and she said "oh I can't say it" I said of course you can and I stressed again that this was confidential and that nothing was traceable and then she started talking about the problems she's had with

the hospital, and how they'd sent her home, and these are all things that were quite important. (focus group)

- **helping respondents to find the words to reply for themselves;**

"And you couldn't put words in their mouth...."

"that was hard"

"She wanted to [say something] but she didn't quite know how. I could think of words but I thought I can't do that. I must admit I did have to help with some, she said 'yeah that's just what I mean'. I said but could I have it in your words? 'No', she said, 'that's fine', and that did worry me slightly, but I knew she wanted to say it but she didn't know how to put it" (focus group)

" Just after I'd introduced myself we're joined by hubby. He insists on answering the questions, so I end up tactfully (I hope) asking them twice to get X's real opinion" (diary extract)

" Some of the time what they were telling me was not for the questionnaire , so I tried to pick up key points and had to ask if they were happy for me to write things down" (diary extract)

"X had problems signing the agreement form as she told me she could not write. I kept the conversational style up throughout the interview so that X would not feel under pressure" (diary extract)

"Wasn't able to turn the interview back to the questionnaire very quickly as she was quite distressed about certain issues" (diary extract)

"I was very conscious not to lead her with any responses as I tried to expand her answers" (diary extract)

- **NEW UNDERSTANDINGS**

Undertaking the role of researcher enabled participants to gain new understandings both of others and of themselves.

- **Of others;**

Many of the researchers had been exposed to parents whose views and priorities in relation to family life were quite different to their own. The researchers themselves were a varied group with a range of education and work experiences. For some the revelation that others, within the same community, lived their lives quite differently had a significant impact on them. It was an issue which was given considerable attention in the focus group;

"I realised that people are not the same as you" (focus group)

Some researchers expressed surprise about specific areas. For example the impact of employment;

"I couldn't believe some the hours some of these young girls worked, she's "well I'm out at 6 o' clock in the morning and I get in at half past 6 at night." (focus group)

Levels of debt tolerated by some;

"And debt, the thing with debt. Not bothered at all. They don't seem to have a problem with it." (focus group)

"They just viewed it as an acceptable part of society that you're in that much debt." (focus group)

"What an eye opener it has been. I feel very lucky to bring up my own child in a debt free house, surrounded by a loving family" (diary extract)

Housing and crime issues;

"The quality of the road she lives in, the houses are boarded up and it's actually used for drugs. And it's raided on a regular basis and she's only just moved into the area just before the baby was born and she's looking to transfer back out again. She doesn't want to stay there because of the drug problem. You can't go out on the street at night." (focus group)

"I went to this house twice in not a very nice area I hasten to add. Had this guy poking out of the bedroom window. So I thought gosh what is this, it was really strange, all the curtains were shut I was (I put that in the diary) a little bit scared I admit, I was shocked it was a bit scary." (focus group)

"When I arrived there all the curtains were shut and it was not a particularly pleasant area - I admit I was feeling a little apprehensive." (diary extract)

Acceptance of poor services;

"I felt a bit frustrated sometimes cos some of mine [participants] talked about things that had happened to them, you know sometimes personal sometimes not. But I wanted them to challenge what had happened to them. The way perhaps they'd been treated by a doctor ...Health Visitor or at the hospital and so forth. The experiences they'd had at school or something the schoolteacher had said and I really felt... I wanted to say well just challenge the way it is kind of thing. Obviously you can't interfere at that level but I didn't think what they were telling me was acceptable and I thought well, if that had happened to me I wouldn't have....."(focus group)

One researcher also had to confront her own assumptions about a specific minority group. This had had a profound effect on her;

"I did 2 visits to the travellers site and I wouldn't say I'd got stereotypical images of travellers but I'd got misunderstanding of them and they were very, very welcoming....really a trusting sort of community and it was educational for me." (focus group)

- **Of self;**

Meeting and hearing about the experiences of the participants in the consultation resulted in considerable reflection and learning for the researchers. Being exposed to many different ways of life had mostly led them to re-evaluate their own assumptions;

"I think that you learn that you cannot impose your standards on other people. I think that's the most important thing that you learn." (focus group)

"I felt that as well, it does make you think, it does me anyway, the way people choose to live. Some of mine [interviewees] were very happy, perhaps I wouldn't choose to live like that, well obviously I don't, but they choose to live that way and there's nothing wrong. It's different to how I choose to live but they are very happy and they've got a happy and fulfilled life." (focus group)

"I know there's a lot of media hype about status and the way people live, what you should, what you shouldn't have and sometimes I think you get caught up in it and it takes something like this to make you re-evaluate how you perceive other people, how you see them and how you judge them. And it's not wrong; people's choice isn't it?" (focus group)

2. CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

- **Access**

Many of the researchers had to work very hard to gain access to participants for the consultation. Due to a number of factors, the SS midwife had been unable to explain the consultation fully to all those identified as falling within the criteria for inclusion in it. As a result a number of participants were surprised to be contacted and this made the process of gaining access more difficult;

"In the initial conversation on the telephone to arrange these appointments quite a lot of the parents I spoke to had no idea, didn't even realise they had filled in the form to begin with. They were a bit.... I mean I only had 2 that knew why I was coming and remembered M [midwife] or the others." (focus group)

"A very hectic phone call on a mobile phone, - the lady said she hadn't seen M (midwife) so I had to explain again what the questionnaire will involve. Feel a bit put out that she's the second lady who says she doesn't know about the survey. Its quite difficult to explain properly over the phone when there's a baby screaming in the background." (diary extract)

A number of potential participants declined to take part at this point, which was disappointing for the researchers who had prepared themselves so thoroughly for the interviews. The frustrations for the researchers of making appointments only to find the interviewees were unable to see them at that point, were immense;

"I was just aghast when I turned up for the first interview and she wasn't there. I thought I can't believe this, but I've arranged this. I thought it was me, I was getting paranoid and it happened again and again." (focus group)

"Well what a let down, first lady wouldn't answer the door -left message on her mobile, phoned next lady and she had to cancel because her little girl was ill....Feeling really frustrated...Being a researcher is a lot harder than you think!" (diary extract)

"My interview was cancelled again by the person. 3rd time she has cancelled now. Quite frustrating." (diary extract)

"I must admit I felt slightly deflated and yes I have to admit a little annoyed...I had 'psyched' myself up to the interview - I was all prepared - and now it wasn't going to happen." (diary extract)

"Feel really cheesed off. I psyched myself up for my first interview this morning, prepared myself really well and rehearsed my introduction. I arrived at the house on time...I went and knocked - 3 times. Nobody was in. I waited 10 mins and tried ringing using my mobile but there was no reply. I drove home and began to realise this was going to be harder than I first thought." (diary extract)

The researchers made enormous efforts to try to contact potential recruits to the consultation;

"I actually physically went to the house and put things through with my home number, my mobile number, and I went twice and then at that point I gave up because you can't ring them because you just get that - the number you have dialled etc and I told Sure Start." (focus group)

"Well, I have now spent 6 days trying to track down 3 women!" (diary extract)

- **Intrusion**

A number of the of the researchers felt that they were 'in the way' as they attempted to conduct interviews in the midst of family life, with the everyday demands of small children;

"they were quite willing to see me but when you got there you felt you were in the way." (focus group)

"others you did feel a bit rushed, as though you were intruding." (focus group)

"Odd times I felt a little uneasy as though I was 'in the way' due to childrens' demands." (diary extract)

However, although some interviewees appeared reluctant to take part, possibly because they were uncertain of the content of the interview, they appeared to find the process useful;

"There was one whose body language was - do you really have to be here - she said to me at the start "well I don't know anything about it" but she says you can come along anyway and I got there and I think she just wanted me there to have a chat with and she was sort of like giving me a bit of negative feedback and I said that at any time she could stop doing the interview and she says "oh no I'm glad you're here its nice to see somebody different." (focus group)

- **Distractions**

Because the researchers were conducting the interviews in the interviewees home there were inevitable distractions to be managed;

"I think sometimes the situation we were in, if the children were there, did sort of detract away from the questions. You know where they might have answered a bit more in depth I felt sometimes they didn't because of the children."(focus group)

" Feel a bit awkward as there's a 2 year old present and toys and TV are a bit distracting." (diary extract)

"It was a longer interview because her toddler needed playing with between questions." (diary extract)

However, because the researchers were parents themselves, they were very sensitive to the needs of parents and children and were able to adjust their approach accordingly;

"And because we're all parents ourselves we knew what sort of pressure they were under pressure trying to keep the children happy so they could answer

your questions. I felt it particularly when they were toddlers. They tended to be toddlers, wanting your pens, wanting to open your bag and look inside and you could feel the parents face sort of getting redder and redder. So you ended up just joining in and playing for about 10 or 15 minutes." (focus group)

"Its doing the balancing right, between not being rude, acknowledging the child and talking to them and trying to carry on with the interview as well." (focus group)

- **Unburdening**

The researchers were surprised at the extent and personal nature of the information that was shared by the participants;

"I couldn't believe how much they told us." (focus group)

It appeared that for many participants, this was the first opportunity they had been given to share their experiences and feelings in relation to the topics under discussion. This meant that at times the process was accompanied by considerable emotion. This 'unburdening' by participants was seen by the researchers as a useful by-product of the consultation process;

"If they'd got something that they wanted to tell you, you didn't want to steer them back to the questionnaire cos it was obvious they'd something they'd got to get off their chest." (focus group)

"The first opportunity I would say that all of them had to talk about the children, the services. The quality of services they'd had from health professionals. Local transport, local facilities, crime, they'd never ever had an opportunity to talk so openly before and for some of them you could see it was quite unburdening of themselves. With all these things that has obviously been going on and I thought that must be a good thing the fact that we've got an opportunity to talk confidentially about all these things that have gone off." (focus group)

"I found as well that maybe people who'd had a bit of trouble giving birth or something they wanted to talk about it." (focus group)

"When we'd finished the questionnaire I'd put it all in the envelope sealed it all up then she went "would you like tea" so I say "oh alright then" cos she's really, really nice so I stayed and we had a cup of tea and a chat and she was worried about this and anxious about that and I thought she just wanted somebody....." (focus group)

A number of the researchers felt that this process had been aided by the fact that the researchers were local parents themselves;

"X was a bit guarded at first but she asked a few questions about my life and when she realised I've also got young children and don't live far away she was much more positive. By the end of our time together I actually felt as though just making her think about things had helped her." (diary extract)

3. ISSUES RELATING TO THE PROCESS

- **Length of questionnaire**

During the training period the group of researchers had developed the questionnaire between them. Lengthy discussions took place regarding the desired content and format of the questionnaire. This resulted in a very lengthy document and also meant that there was little time to pilot the questionnaire before beginning the consultation. A number of the researchers identified this as a weakness:

"I would have really liked more time before, I don't think we had enough time to pilot the questionnaire right"(focus group)

Because of its length, the questionnaire took a long time to complete with participants. The researchers often had to give extensive information about Sure Start services and many participants spent some time giving details of their experiences. As a result the time taken to conduct the interviews varied from 45 minutes to two hours, depending on the researcher, the participant and their needs. The timing was felt by many researchers to be a factor in the take up rates for the consultation:

"But as I was saying in my experience, and most other peoples, once I'd done one I knew how long it was going to take. So I couldn't ring up then and say all right you know... once she said, "how long will it take?" I said well "its going to be a minimum an hour and 10 minutes and hour and a quarter", cos I think I've done one in that or something. And she said, "I haven't got that time to spare". So I did offer to come twice and said we can do it you know and I can come back twice that's no problem. But at that point she says no "I'm too busy, I can't really spare the time", so that was a factor. Too lengthy." (focus group)

Nevertheless, a number of the researchers felt that the length of interviews was not always a problem:

"I was in there 2 and a half hours! But I think it had been a very worthwhile experience. She was a lovely girl and had plenty to say. She told me she had enjoyed doing the interview - I felt quite pleased!" (diary extract)

- **Difficulties of use**

The content of the questionnaire was also felt by some, on reflection, to be difficult. This could be because of the content;

"Some of the questions you know, about 5 pieces of fruit, I felt were a bit patronising. How far do Sure Start intervene in people's lives? To say what's right and what's wrong. And they've got a fairly happy life and stuff and that's the way they've chosen to live and it's not wrong, there's nothing wrong, and so how far do you....".(focus group)

"I did feel slightly uncomfortable asking some of the more sensitive questions-but on the whole it was not a problem." (diary extract)

Or because of the way the question was laid out;

"I said this is going to be a problem and I dreaded getting to that page. It was dreadful the whole way it was laid out. It didn't fit at all "(focus group)

4. IMPACT OF THE WORK

- **Support and 'doing good'**

The researchers felt that for many participants the process of visiting and listening to them had been useful in itself. Many were quite isolated and for them the researchers represented a friendly local parent who was interested in them and what they had to say;

"And I thought I'd done a lot of good saying, "there's this and this just phone up and find out about it." I found some of my parents were quite isolated." (focus group)

"If they hadn't got the support of the parents, the extended family, they wanted me to stay there for a chat cos they didn't know any other parents, I had about 2 or 3 that didn't really know any other parents in the area never bothered going to the parent and toddler sessions, family fun group or anything, or had transport problems." (focus group)

" I felt that I was giving these women information that they would not have got for themselves." (diary extract)

I feel this job is very rewarding when you get to interview level because you can make a difference." (diary extract)

- **Marketing for Sure Start**

The researchers were disappointed about the low level of knowledge that participants had about North East Derbyshire Sure Start;

"A lot of parents didn't really know what Sure Start services were actually on offer at all." (focus group)

"I found that a lot of people didn't know about, before they had the baby, about the services before going to antenatal groups. There didn't seem to be enough information given out before they're pregnant perhaps more advertising at surgery or whatever." (focus group)

However, this did give them an opportunity to share useful information about the range of activities being planned and provided by Sure Start. This had been anticipated and the researchers had all been provided with a laminated list of activities with contact details and a pack of leaflets regarding various programmes, help lines and events;

"All mine were really glad that I'd come because they knew nothing about Sure Start. The 3 I did they were so glad." (focus group)

"It's a good job we got the information packs. I spent a lot of time going through them and showing them ..." (focus group)

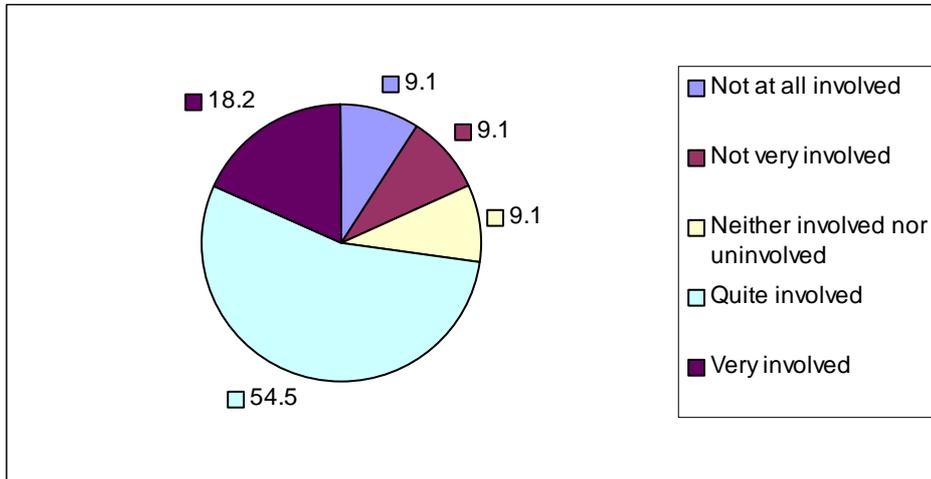
"they were all really pleased cos they knew nothing about it. So I felt like we were doing a marketing exercise." (focus group)

"they didn't know what was on offer, they were pleased that they had been told it was good I think." (focus group)

"She said she had found it [interview] very useful as before today she knew very little about Sure Start and the many services it provides." (diary extract)

ANALYSIS AND REPORT WRITING

The majority (72.7%) of the parent researchers felt either quite or very involved in the analysis of the data and report writing.



Respondents reported finding interpreting and sorting the data, seeing the results come together and creating graphs for the report very interesting.

"Thoughts and ideas taken onboard."

"Reading the comments and identifying patterns."

"Presenting the data how we thought best."

"Sorting, classifying and organising data into a report format."

"Using the computer and forming graphical representation."

Respondents were also asked what was the least satisfying and what they would like to have done differently to improve this part of their work. The most common comment was about being rushed and not having enough time.

"Lack of time to finish. We should have been given more chance to look at the findings of each group in more depth."

SKILL CHANGES

The self-assessment skills questionnaire data collected from the researchers in both the pre and post experience questionnaires was analysed using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (exact significance, 2 tailed). This test enabled analysis of the statistical significance of changes identified. Results showing a difference of .05 or below are significant. The areas this applies to are in bold in the table below.

	Total	Negative ranks (i.e. lower ranks than previously given)	Positive ranks (i.e. higher ranks than previously given)	Ties (i.e. the same rank as previously given)	Significant Difference
Meeting people in their own homes	11	1	6	4	.063
Speaking clearly to people I don't know and be understood	11	1	4	6	.312
Explaining the research project	11	0	9	2	.004
Producing written work as part of the training course	11	0	5	6	.063
Listening carefully to people without interrupting	11	0	6	5	.031
Knowing how to show people I am interested in what they have to say	11	0	7	4	.016
I can encourage people I don't know to speak	11	0	7	4	.016
I can remember things that have been said in a conversation and write them down later	11	0	6	5	.031
I know how to support people to speak about things that are difficult for them	11	0	5	6	.063
I can accept a refusal without showing offence	11	0	7	4	0.16
I can write notes while talking to someone	11	1	7	3	.055
I know how to record information gained from a number of questionnaires and interviews	11	1	6	4	.281
I can interpret and draw conclusions from information gained in interviews and questionnaires	11	2	5	4	.766
I can write a report about what I have found out in a research project	11	2	5	4	.359
Speaking to a group of people in a meeting	10	1	6	3	.141

In summary this data shows that the researchers (as a group) assessed themselves as having gained new skills in the areas of;

- Explaining the research project
- Listening carefully to people without interrupting
- Knowing how to show people they are interested in what they have to say
- Encouraging people they don't know to speak
- Remembering things that have been said in a conversation and writing them down later
- Accepting a refusal without showing offence

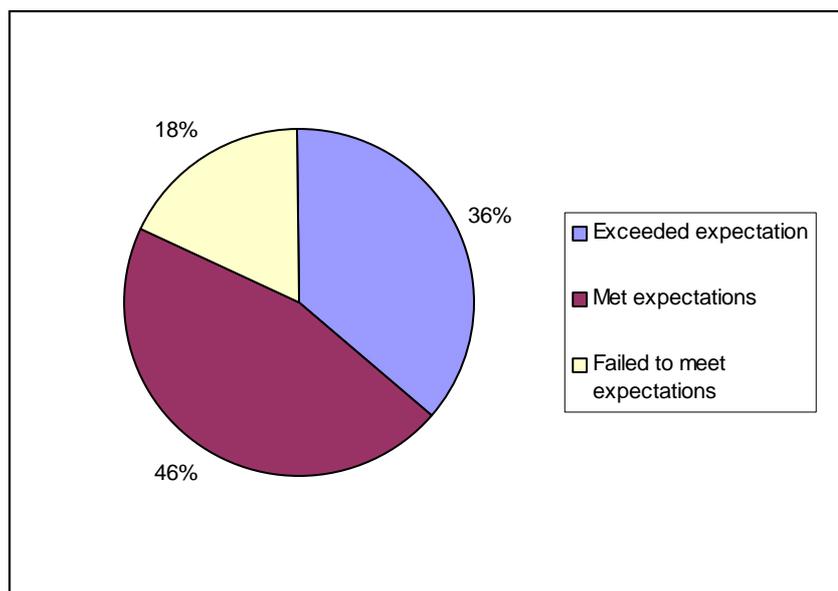
The areas where they assessed themselves as having not significantly developed new skills were;

- Speaking clearly to people I don't know and be understood
- Knowing how to record information gained from a number of questionnaires and interviews
- Interpreting and drawing conclusions from information gained in interviews and questionnaires
- Writing a report about the findings of a research project
- Speaking to a group of people in a meeting

The lack of change in these areas is perhaps an indication of a growing awareness on the part of the researchers, of the skill levels needed in these areas. Thus, at the outset, the researchers may have been unaware of the extent of skills needed to successfully interpret a range of data and were therefore confident about their own abilities in this area. On conclusion of the work they may have been more aware and as a consequence less confident of their own abilities.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Overall most researchers (82%, n=9) felt that the experience of taking part in the project had either met or exceeded their expectations.



Questionnaire comments reinforced this positive view of the programme:

"It gave me more confidence in myself to speak out and ask questions."

"I came into the project wanting to help other parents and feel I have achieved this."

"My self confidence has increased. In the beginning I would have run a mile if I had to knock on a strangers door."

"I was prepared for the difficulties in contacting parents and the no shows."

Diary extracts also revealed this positive outcome;

"It was a lovely experience doing this. I thought that I would not feel able to remember or carry out the questioning with confidence. But after walking into the homes and starting to chat my confidence grew and the questions became easier."

"It's a pity this is the last one (interview) as I'm really enjoying it."

"I enjoyed the experience immensely and felt very confident in my ability to do the questionnaire (piloting it 2/3 times made the difference)." (diary extract)

"I really enjoyed today, it was a lovely worthwhile experience" (diary extract)

"The people I've met both during the training period and whilst conducting the interviews have been fantastic. It has certainly been a worthwhile experience." (diary extract)

"I have enjoyed the work I have been involved in, even though it was for a brief period." (diary extract)

"the best thing was at the end of an interview when they said they had enjoyed it & I left them knowing that I had done a good job. This gave me tremendous satisfaction and made it all worthwhile." (diary extract)

REFLECTIONS OF RESEARCH FACILITATOR

The comments of the parent researchers reflect many of the issues raised for the research facilitator. Having sufficient time to develop and pilot the questionnaire was a major concern. The group of parent researchers was bigger than we had originally anticipated and they all had many opinions to express! The process of discussion and development of appropriate questions was time consuming and rushed towards the end of the training programme.

As a more experienced researcher the issue of when to intervene and make explicit recommendations to the group and when to let them explore areas for themselves and potentially make mistakes was also challenging. Both Sure Start and the research facilitator wished to support the learning of the researchers, and felt that a degree of experimentation would enable this. We also wished to make full use of their expertise as local parents.

Guidance for the researchers was needed at all stages to ensure that

- The questionnaire was clear and specific questions unambiguous
- Analysis of the questions would be relatively simple and so within the scope of the parent researchers

- Inaccurate conclusions were not drawn from the data collected

CONCLUSIONS

The parent researchers were highly successful in their completion of the community consultation. Despite some weaknesses in the training programme as highlighted above, the researchers found the experience to be both enjoyable and worthwhile.

The researchers exhibited many skills during the community consultation and some were shown to have been developed during the process. The parent researchers showed themselves to be tenacious in their efforts to track down and interview local participants to the consultation and sensitive to needs of those being interviewed. As a result they successfully interviewed 62 local parents and expectant mothers, who revealed many personal details of their lives to them. They showed high levels of understanding of the need for informed consent, accurate recording of data and confidentiality. The analysis of this data and the report that was written was undertaken with enthusiasm and skill and the report created is of a high standard.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE SURE START

The positive outcomes of this project for North East Derbyshire Sure Start are many and include;

- The creation of a 'bank' of enthusiastic and skilled parent researchers
- A community consultation report providing details of the concerns of local families, their feelings regarding local services and highlighting areas where Sure Start could usefully provide new services. This could also serve as a baseline for future surveys to assess progress
- A cohort of parents who have been well informed of the range of Sure Start services available and encouraged to participate

RECOMMENDATIONS

This experimental approach to community consultation raised many issues and the evaluation of the researchers' experiences has given great insight into areas which could be improved if the work is repeated. The issues highlighted within this report are summarised below

Recruitment

Ensure that;

- Payment for work undertaken is made promptly

Training programme

Ensure that;

- The training programme is of sufficient length to cover all elements required
- Previous educational and life experiences are used as a resource within the learning programme
- There is sufficient flexibility within the training programme to enable all participants to find it stimulating and interesting
- Sufficient time is given for development and piloting of research tools
- Researchers are prepared for disappointments and difficulties of accessing participants

Data collection

Ensure that;

- Preparatory work is undertaken to recruit participants and inform them of the consultation process
- Sufficient time is given for data collection
- The research tool is sufficiently refined to ensure all researchers are comfortable with it

Data analysis

Ensure that;

- Sufficient time is given for the analysis of the data and writing of the report

APPENDIX 1: INITIAL LETTER TO RESEARCHERS

Dear

Congratulations on your appointment as a community researcher for NE Derbyshire Sure Start. I am looking forward to working with you on the study.

This is the first time NE Derbyshire Sure Start has used local people as researchers and as such we are keen to work out whether the training and support we give you is what you need to do the work successfully. We plan to check this out with you informally during your training and as you undertake the work so that we can add in extra support or training as needed. We would also like to try and measure what, if anything, the training and work have given you by using simple questionnaires at the outset of the training, at the end of the training and at the end of the project.

You do not have to complete these questionnaires; it is entirely up to you whether you decide to do so or not. Your decision in this matter will not affect your employment as a researcher in any way. Should you agree to complete the questionnaire please be assured that any answers you give will be anonymous. As the researcher I will not know which questionnaires came from which person. My administrator will keep a database linking names to questionnaire numbers so that she can send reminders to you where appropriate, but I will not have access to it. The questionnaires will only be seen by myself and individuals will not be identified in any reports arising from the project. You will have the right to withdraw from taking part in this process at any time and do not have to give a reason.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about completing these questionnaires on:

Phone: 0114 271 5642 Mobile: 07786336266

Email: a.m.rowe@sheffield.ac.uk

I attach a questionnaire here and if you are happy complete it, I would like you to do so as soon as you can and return it to me in the enclosed prepaid envelope. If you do not wish to be included please contact my administrator Julie Foers on 0114 271 5913 or email: j.foers@sheffield.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I look forward to working with you on the study

Yours

Ann Rowe

Research and development facilitator

Institute of General Practice and Primary Care, University of Sheffield

APPENDIX 2: FINAL LETTER TO RESEARCHERS

Dear

As we are now reaching the end of our research project I wanted to ask you one last time (I promise!) to tell me what you have thought of your experiences as a community researcher. Attached here is a questionnaire, which asks you to give your opinions on all the different elements of the role. It also asks you to assess your abilities on the same measures that I gave you before you began. Please complete it as fully as possible.

As before, you do not have to complete these questionnaires; it is entirely up to you whether you decide to do so or not. Should you agree to complete the questionnaire please be assured that any answers you give will be confidential and anonymous. As the researcher I will not know which questionnaires came from which person. The Sure Start administrator will keep a database linking names to questionnaire numbers so that she can send reminders to you where appropriate, but I will not have access to it. The questionnaires will only be seen by myself and individuals will not be identified in any reports arising from the project. You will have the right to withdraw from taking part in this process at any time and do not have to give a reason. I am intending to write a report on your experiences for NE Derbyshire Sure Start and this may be shared with other Sure Starts in the country. I may also possibly write an article in an academic journal based on your experiences. I will ensure that you are sent copies of any documents before they are published so that you can, if you wish, comment on my interpretation of your experiences and advise me of any material you would like changed. In order to ensure that you are completely happy that your contribution is included in these documents, could I ask you to please complete the attached consent form and return it to me.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about completing these questionnaires or on any aspect of this process on:

Phone: 0114 271 5642 Mobile: 07786336266

Email: a.m.rowe@sheffield.ac.uk

I attach a questionnaire here and if you are happy complete it, I would like you to do so as soon as you can and return it to me in the enclosed prepaid envelope, along with the consent form. If you do not wish to be included please contact my administrator Julie Foers on 0114 271 5913 or email: j.foers@sheffield.ac.uk

Thank you for working with me on this project. I have thoroughly enjoyed it and feel the final report will be a credit to all our efforts. I look forward to seeing you all again at the launch party!

All best wishes

Ann Rowe

Research and development facilitator

Institute of General Practice and Primary Care, University of Sheffield

APPENDIX 3:
NE Derbyshire Sure Start
Parent Researchers Consent Form

NAME	ADDRESS

	Please initial each section
I understand that the information I have given on the University of Sheffield questionnaires, on the taped group discussion and in my research diary will be used in this study	
I have had a chance to ask questions about the study and am happy with the answers I have been given.	
I understand that all personal information I have given will be confidential.	
I understand that I can stop taking part in the study at any time.	
I know that I can choose not to answer any questions in the questionnaire and do not have to give a reason.	
I know that I will be sent advance copies of the completed reports and articles to review before they are published.	
I know whom to contact if I have any questions or problems concerning this study.	
I agree to take part in this study.	

----- Name of participant	----- Date	----- - Signature
----- Name of researcher	----- Date	----- - Signature

Identification number

APPENDIX 4:
PARENT RESEARCHERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer each question as fully as possible

1. Educational qualifications:

NVQs	
GCSEs/O levels	
A levels	
Professional qualifications	
Other (please identify)	

2. Employment:

Please summarise your employment history

Job title	Dates

3. Do you have any previous experience in research/survey work?

Yes/no

If yes please give details below:

4. What are you most looking forward to as a parent researcher?

5. What are you most anxious about?

6. What do you hope this role will give you?

Please number the items below in terms of their importance to you with 1 being most important and 8 being the least important. Number as many as apply to you

	Number
An opportunity to meet other people in the area	
Increased chances of future employment in Sure Start or elsewhere	
An opportunity to gain new skills	
An opportunity to get a new qualification	
Additional income	
An opportunity to be active in support of the community	
An opportunity to increase my experience	
Something else (please state)	

7. If you are hoping to go on to further employment

Yes/no

If yes, what kind of employment do you have in mind? (please state)

8. Are you hoping to go on to more educational or training courses following your employment as a parent researcher?

Yes/no

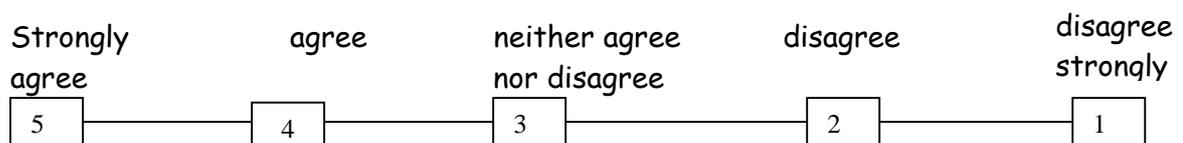
If yes, what kind of courses do you have in mind? (please state)

9. Your skills and confidence

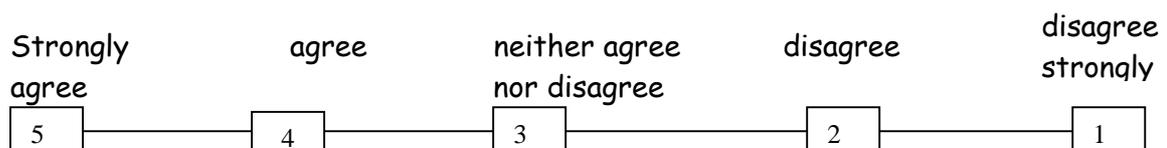
The following questions relate to skills we expect to cover during your training programme. As such it is not expected that you will be confident about all these areas at the present time. Your answers will help us to plan the training to suit your needs and to evaluate how successful it was in developing your skills and confidence.

Please assess yourself as honestly as possible in relation to the following statement. Indicate your responses by putting a ring around the most appropriate number:

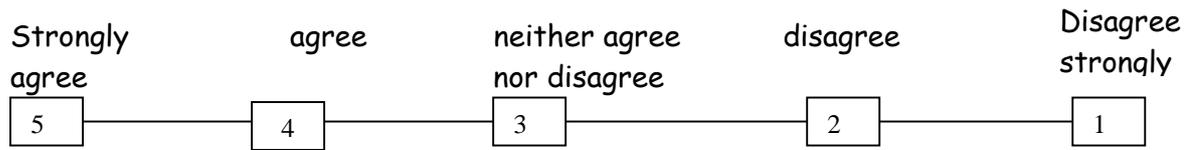
a) I am confident about arranging to meet people in their own homes



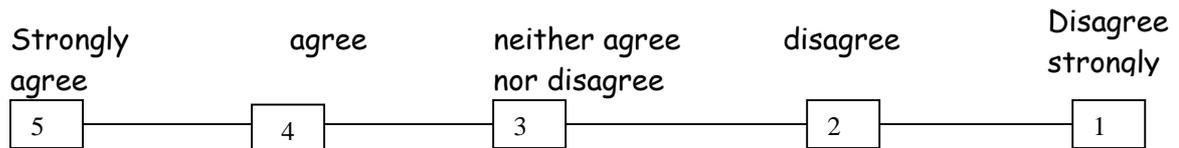
b) I can speak clearly to people I don't know and be understood



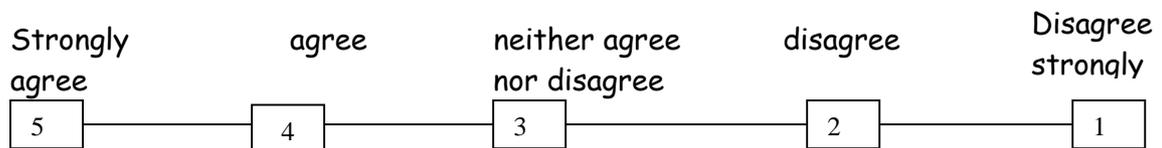
c) I feel confident about explaining the research



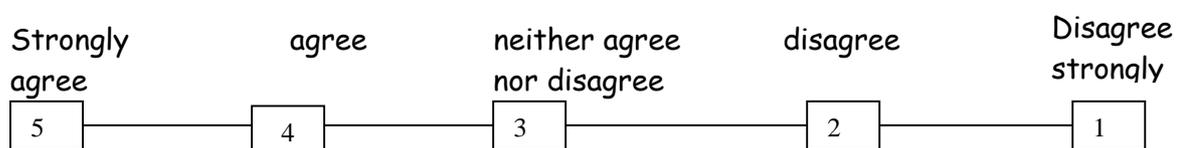
d) I feel confident about producing written work as part of the training



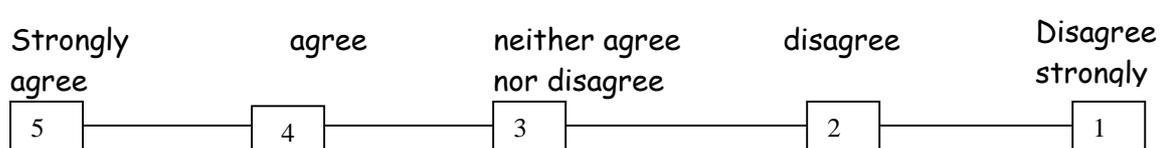
e) I can listen carefully to people without interrupting



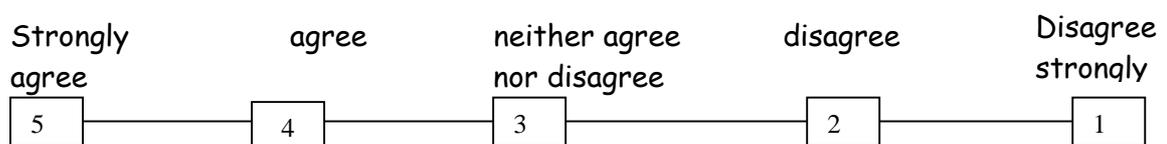
f) I know how to show people that I am interested in what they have to say



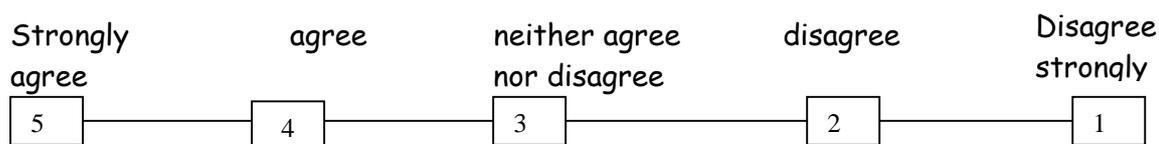
g) I am confident that I can encourage people I don't know to speak



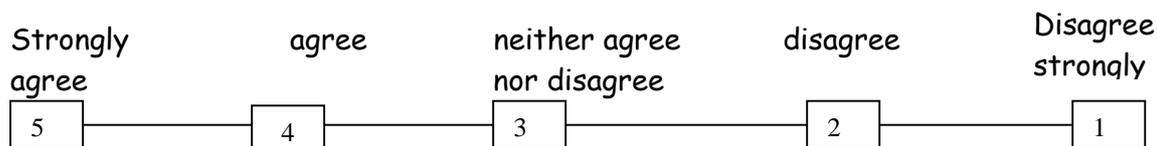
h) I can remember things that have been said in a conversation and write them down later



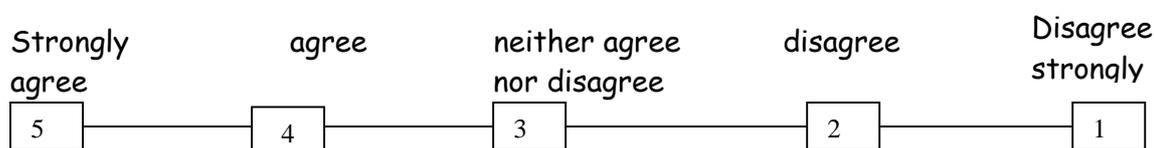
i) I know how to support people to speak about things that are difficult for them



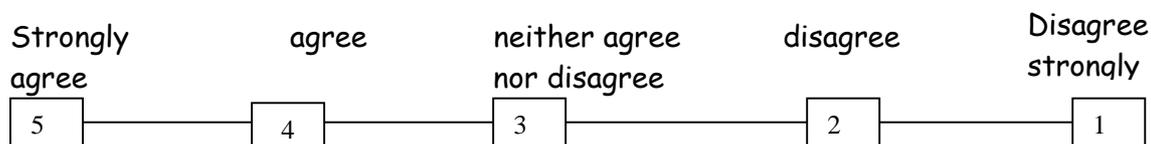
j) I can accept a refusal without showing offence



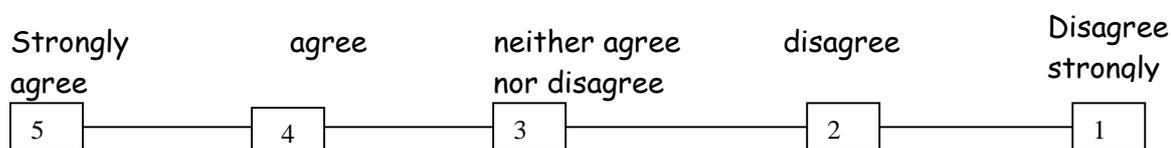
k) I can write notes while talking to someone



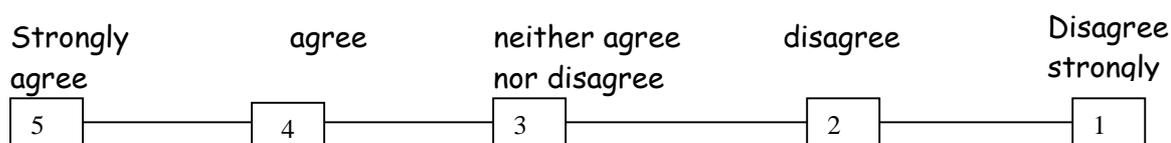
l) I know how to present information gained from a number of questionnaires and interviews



m) I can interpret and draw conclusions from information gained in interviews and questionnaires



n) I can write a report about what I have found out in a research project



APPENDIX 5:

COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS QUESTIONNAIRE

I am interested in finding out about your experiences of becoming a parent researcher and in your comments on the training and support you received.

Please answer each question as fully as possible

EXPECTATIONS

1 Thinking back to your expectations of this role, do you feel your experiences have;

Exceeded your expectations	Met your expectations	Failed to meet your expectations

2 Why?

--

RECRUITMENT

I am interested in your experiences of the recruitment process in order to ensure that Sure Start uses the best possible approaches in the future

3 How did you learn about the role of community researcher?

From a Sure Start worker	
From Sure Start publicity material	
From a friend	
From an advertisement	
Neighbouring Sure Start programmes	
Other (please state)	

4 Is there anything about the recruitment process (advertising, documents, explanations given, interviews etc) you feel could have been improved?

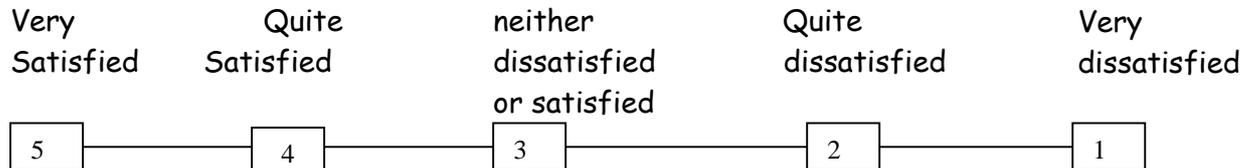
Yes No

If yes, what would you like to see done differently in the future?

TRAINING

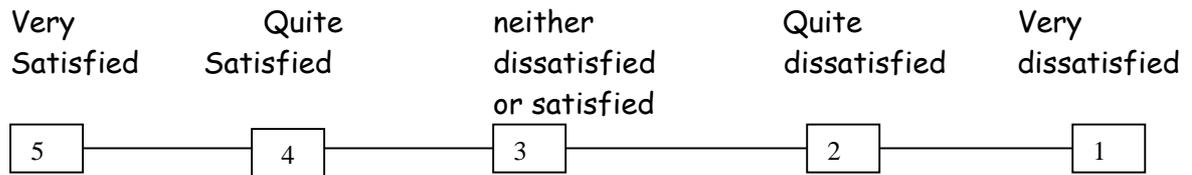
How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the training programme?

5 Course content



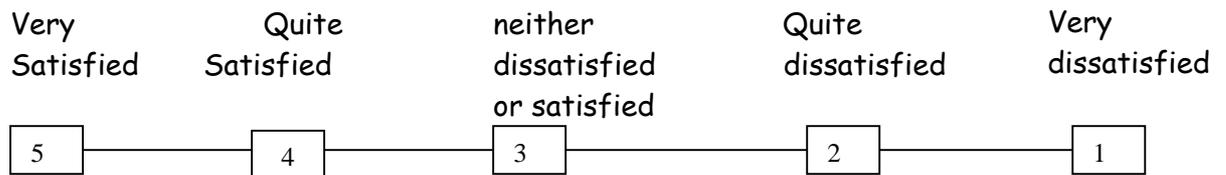
6 Why?

7 Teaching



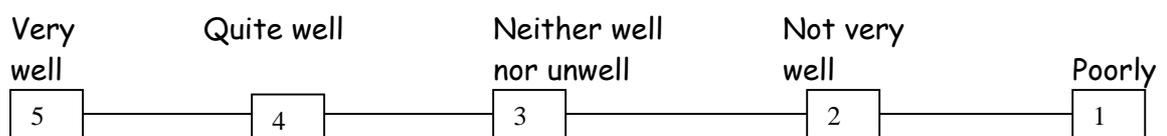
8 Why?

9 Educational level of the course



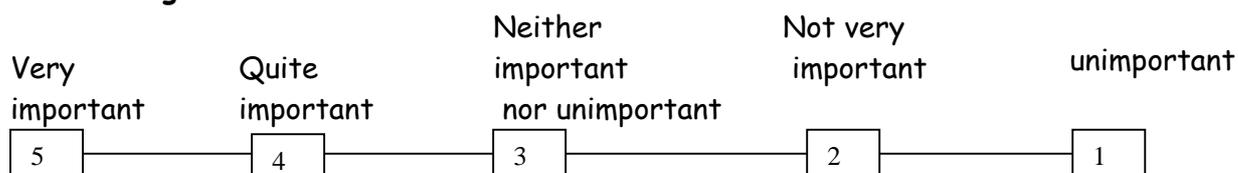
10 Why?

11 How well do you feel the course prepared you for the work you undertook as a parent researcher?



12 Why?

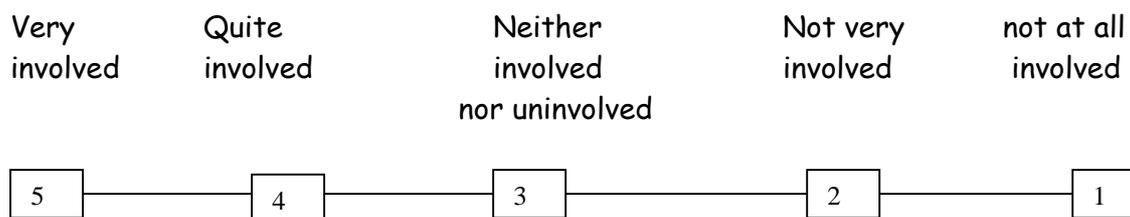
13 How important was it to you to receive an accredited qualification from the training?



14 Why?

DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

15 How involved did you feel in the development of the questionnaire?



16 Why?

17 What, if anything would you like to have changed about the development of the questionnaire?

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

18 What did you like best about doing the interviews with parents?

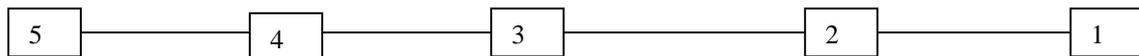
19 What did you like the least about the interviews?

20 What, if anything, would you like to have seen done differently, to improve the interviewing phase of the project?

ANALYSING THE DATA AND REPORT WRITING

21 How involved did you feel in the analysis and report writing?

Very involved	Quite involved	Neither involved nor uninvolved	Not very involved	not at all involved
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22 What did you like best about the analysis and report writing phase of the project?

23 What did you like least about the analysis and report writing phase of the project?

24 What, if anything, would you like to have seen done differently with regard to the analysis and writing of the report?

25 What have you found the most difficult aspect of the role and why?

26 Which has been the most rewarding part of the programme and why?

27 What, if any, new skills do you feel you have developed from your involvement in the project?

28 What have you learned about yourself from being involved with the community consultation programme?

--

FUTURE PLANS

29 Are you already involved in or planning any of the following as a result of your involvement with the community consultation?

Further education courses	
Employment within Sure Start	
Employment elsewhere	
Voluntary work for Sure Start	
Voluntary work elsewhere	
Something else? Please state here	

30 Do you have any further comments you would like to make about the community consultation programme?

--

YOUR CONFIDENCE

Please indicate your response to the following statements by putting a ring around one of the numbers:

I am confident about meeting people in their own homes

Strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Disagree strongly
5	4	3	2	1

I can speak clearly to people I don't know and be understood

Strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Disagree strongly
5	4	3	2	1

I feel confident about explaining the research project

Strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Disagree strongly
5	4	3	2	1

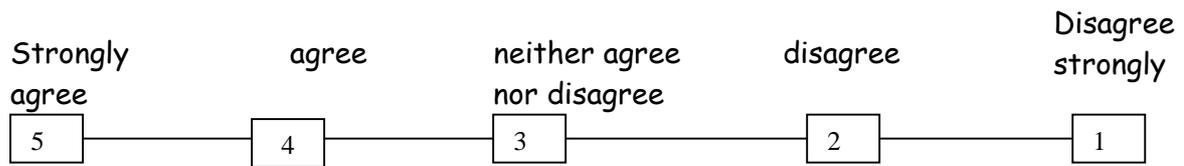
I feel confident about producing written work as part of a training course

Strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Disagree strongly
5	4	3	2	1

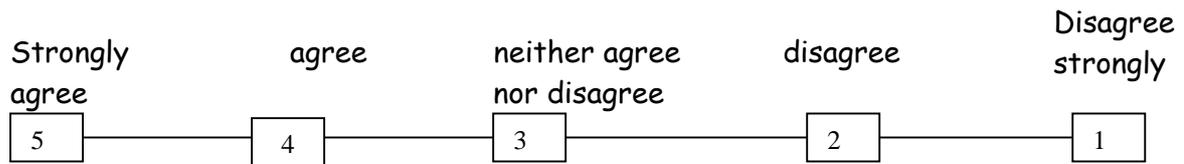
I can listen carefully to people without interrupting

Strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Disagree strongly
5	4	3	2	1

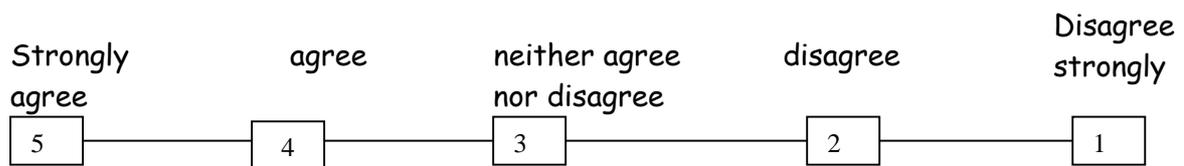
I know how to show people that I am interested in what they have to say



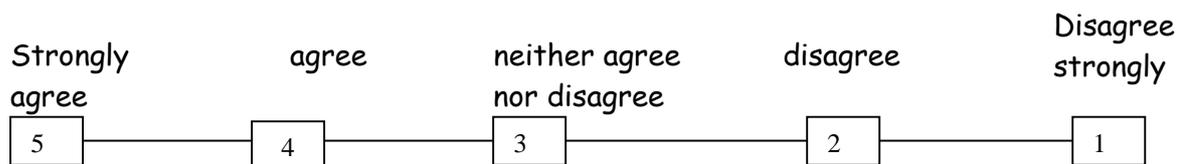
I am confident that I can encourage people I don't know to speak



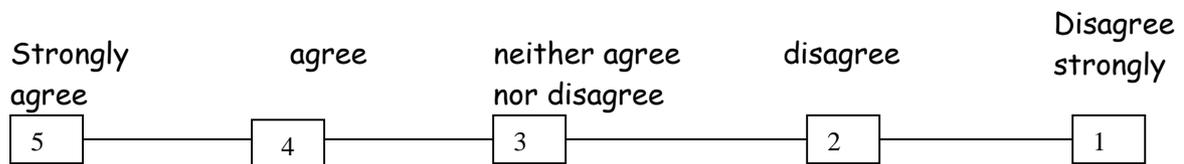
I can remember things that have been said in a conversation and write them down later



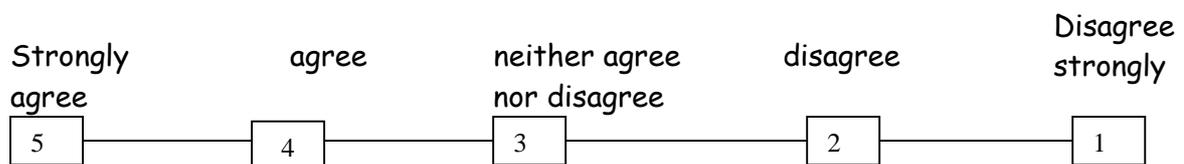
I know how to support people to speak about things that are difficult for them



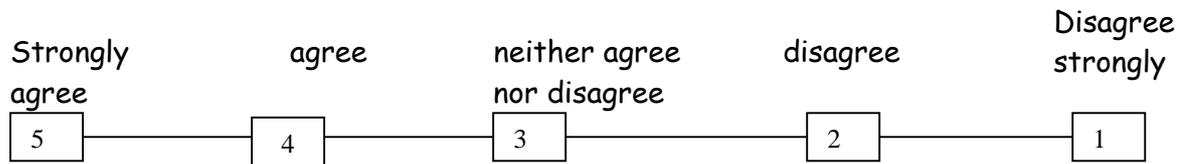
I can accept a refusal without showing offence



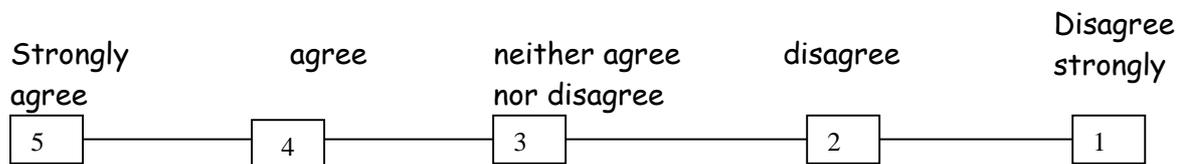
I can write notes while talking to someone



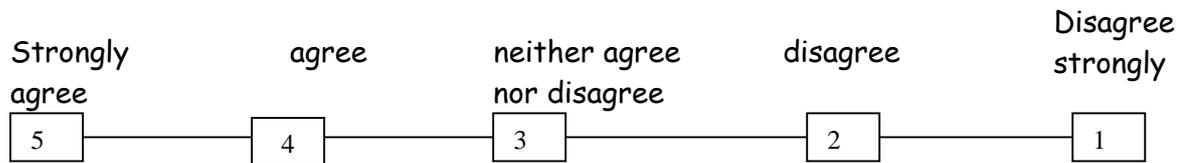
I know how to record information gained from a number of questionnaires and interviews



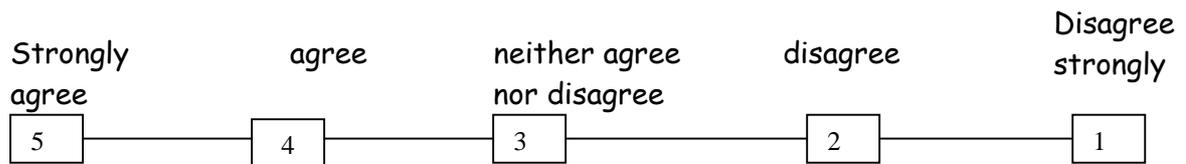
I can interpret and draw conclusions from information gained in interviews and questionnaires



I can write a report about what I have found out in a research project



I feel confident about speaking to a group of people in a meeting



Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and all best wishes for the future