

SURE START CENTRAL BRENT

REPORT OF LOCAL EVALUATION 2003-2004

1. Context

- 1.1 It was decided by the core team; the parent's panel and the Local Management Board that we would evaluate a SSCB project as the first annual evaluation as this would be a small scale evaluation and useful information would be obtained to inform the programme to improve service delivery.
- 1.2 'Toddlers' Transport' is a project which was funded from the beginning of the programme. It has been very well received by parents but the general organisation has not been successful.
- 1.3 The project was funded to provide transport for parents with young children in the catchment area because of the poor public transport. Parents could not take their children out of the area to the local parks, sports centres and other places of interest and get back in time to collect older children from school.
- 1.4 A service level agreement was drawn up with Brent Community Transport (BCT) to provide a minibus or larger coach to take the parents and children on 26 trips over the year. A number of hospital visits was included in the service level agreement (SLA) for parents with children who need regular hospital treatment. The funding also included a part-time Sure Start administrator to be employed through BCT.
- 1.5 Only a relatively few parents had taken up the regular trips to the shops and often parents outside the catchment area were taking spaces as parents within the area did not receive the publicity regarding the trips.
- 1.6 In April 2003 there were 1,297 Under 4 year olds living in the SSCB catchment area.
- 1.7 43 Families used the Toddlers' Transport project between April 2003 and March 2004.
- 1.8 The parents felt very strongly that they would like the project to continue but changes needed to be made in the future to provide an effective service which meets their needs.
- 1.9 It was agreed that parents and staff would carry out the local evaluation as a learning process for future evaluations.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 Aims

- To ascertain the reasons for failure of the project in reaching families in the SSCB catchment area.
- To produce a report that will give information to enable the project to be run more efficiently in the future to meet the community needs.

2.2 Objectives

- Consultation with both users and non-users of the Toddlers' Transport Project to obtain data on how the project is viewed by the community.
- A review of the operational aspect of the project to establish value for money and to identify any problems arising from administration.
- To identify changes that need to be made to ensure effective management of the project and to ensure outreach to the wide SSCB catchment area.
- To produce a report to the SSCB Local Management Board, Brent Community Transport and the Parents' Panel to inform future service delivery.

3. Methodology.

- 3.1** The evaluators were members of the core team and parents who formed a subgroup. Each member of the subgroup had specific responsibilities.
- 3.2** The timescale for the evaluation was agreed to be from August 2003 to April 2004
- 3.3** Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews with users and non-users of the project.
- 3.4** Three meetings were held with the Brent Community Transport project management team.
- 3.5** A cost-effectiveness analysis of the service was completed
- 3.6** The project sub-group reviewed the data and information collected through the project to inform future developments of the service.

4. Process of evaluation and main findings

- 4.1 The topic and methodology for evaluation was agreed by parents and Board members at meetings held in May and June 2003.
- 4.2 A subgroup was formed in July 2003 to carry out the evaluation. This consisted of the SSCB programme Data Officer, Home Visiting team co-ordinator, Director, and three parents elected from the Parents' Panel.
- 4.3 Roles and responsibilities were allocated to sub-group members in order to proceed with the evaluation.(Appendix 1)
- 4.4 Training was provided in September for the sub-group on methods on evaluation of the programme. The Director of Sure Start Enfield delivered the training.
- 4.5 Questionnaires were devised for users and non-users.
(Appendices 2 and 3)
- 4.6 These were distributed by the subgroup and other members of the SSCB core team, at all summer events during August and September.
- 4.7 In total 46 questionnaires were completed. The questionnaires were analysed (Appendix 4) and the main findings were as follows:
 - The users found that the organisation of the trips was good and that they were generally satisfied with the standard of the transport and the trips organised.
 - The main problems were caused by lateness at pick-up points and leaving for the trips and publicity regarding the trips.
 - The issues for non-users were around convenience of timing and pick-up points and publicity of trips out in good time.
 - 50% of the non-users said that they would like more trips at the weekends.
- 4.8 The Toddlers' Transport management team were invited to a meeting in September 2003 to discuss the issues arising from the SSCB community which had been reported to the subgroup. An action plan was drawn up to improve the service in response the views expressed. (Appendix 5.)
Key decisions taken at the meeting were:
- 4.9 In November 2003 the SSCB Finance Director and Data Officer carried out a review of the cost-effectiveness of the project. Main findings were:
 - The project was costing £35,000 for 24 trips. Only 43 families actually attended the trips.

- Addresses were not checked and the people who booked the trips did not always attend and if they did, they brought friends and relatives who lived outside the catchment area. This meant that very few people in the SSCB catchment area were benefiting from the service.

4.10 A new Toddlers' Transport project administrator was appointed in October 2003 as the previous administrator resigned from the post. She attended a Parents' Panel meeting in November 2003 to hear the views of the parents regarding the administration of the Project.

Issues arising from this meeting were:

- Publicity was not distributed effectively to reach all SSCB parents and many did not know about the trips.
- The parents had not been consulted properly on the venues for the trips organised by the administrator
- Too few people went on some of the regular trips and this was not reviewed by the administrator.
- There were some complaints about some of the drivers being non-cooperative and having a lack of understanding about the needs of young children on trips.
- Most drivers were polite and helpful.
- Often coaches were late arriving at pick up points and trips started late because passengers were also late arriving and drivers waited too long for them.
- There was no check on passengers' addresses or SSCB membership cards.

4.11 In January 2003 a second meeting was arranged with the Toddlers Transport managers. At this meeting the sub-group was informed that the administrator had left suddenly and no-one had been available to take forward the action plan. Also the funding had been used for this financial year and no further trips would be organised. Feedback was given from the questionnaires. A date was fixed for the annual Service level Agreement review.

4.12 The SLA review meeting was held in February 2004 and it was decided that the project would not be funded for the next financial year. (Appendix 6)

5. Recommendations

- 5.1** A need has been identified from the evaluation, for the project to continue but under alternative management and funding arrangements.
- 5.2** SSCB should no longer fund an administrator for BCT as this is not a cost-effective way of providing a transport service.
- 5.3** A subgroup of the parents' panel should be formed to devise an annual programme of trips in consultation with the parents in the SSCB catchment area.
- 5.4** Transport should be provided by BCT at a negotiated price for the programme of trips agreed on.
- 5.5** Data should be kept of parents and children using the service through the SSCB monitoring procedures and entered on the SSCB data base monthly.
- 5.6** A part-time administrator should be allocated to the project to keep all records and to ensure publicity and bookings are coordinated.
- 5.7** Regular monitoring and evaluation of the project should take place by the Toddlers' Transport sub group. This will ensure early identification of any issues which arise and ensure action is agreed to address the problems.