

DRAFT

Sure Start On the Ocean

Work with Fathers: Preparing the Ground

A project commissioned by Sure Start with the aim of raising the profile of Sure Start as a service for fathers and to conduct a basic inquiry into the needs and concerns of fathers, gathering contacts and providing a starting point for the specialist worker to be appointed to work on the Ocean estate.

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Summary

This report provides a detailed account of a piece of work designed to demonstrate to fathers that they are valued as major players in their child's development. Sure Start on the Ocean has a commitment to involving fathers and sees this aspect of the work as key to the Sure Start objective 'Strengthening families and communities'. The findings reveal that fathers seriously care about their children, are often more participant in the home than stereotypes suggest, and have an awareness of what would help them to be more effective in their families. The recommendations attempt to suggest ways of meeting needs as perceived by the fathers involved and as perceived by professionals working with parents of young children. It is hoped that if fathers are well informed and given opportunity to share in the care and support of their children, that their children will benefit in terms of physical, emotional and intellectual development. It is also hoped that through this process young children and fathers will begin to build relationships that may withstand the inevitable challenges of the teenage years.

Introduction - The original proposal for this piece of work refers to both research and piloting a piece of work. After discussions with Sure Start the emphasis of the project shifted towards a more practice oriented project.

Two premises underpin the assumption that fathers' needs are to be specifically addressed in the work of Sure Start:

1] that men are often alienated from the process of having and caring for children, as medical and support services are directed at mothers, and women turn to friends, mothers and sisters for information and support.

2] within the culture of the majority ethnic community on the Ocean Estate, traditionally men have not been seen, nor see themselves, as major players in the care of babies and young children. Also, their role as workers, takes them out of the home, often, during the evening as many of them work in catering or other services operating at night. This mitigates against easily establishing shared parenting.

While these two premises may hold true, both in wider society, and in more specific ways for Sure Start on the Ocean, it is important not to make assumptions about individual men. Certainly, amongst those we met, there were those who clearly had a very close relationship with their children, were aware of their needs and concerned for their futures, and who were willing to share their feelings about parenting and seek support.

With these two premises as a starting point, the guidance of the Sure Start management was to contact ante-natal visitors, the Breastfeeding Project staff, midwives, playing /learning/ reading project workers, the behaviour project, and home safety, with a view to looking together at ways to raise fathers' awareness and enabling them to access Sure Start for support.

Two issues which are known to be of direct concern for fathers in the community, are teenage behaviour and progress at school. It was felt that these concerns could be built on to encourage fathers' involvement. Good relationships established when children are young may help prevent future disaffection. Being pro-active in a child's development by playing, talking and reading with them provides a foundation for learning at school.

Relationship building through playing and learning was therefore seen as a key objective in working with fathers, and involving men in anti- and post-natal services and family activity was seen as crucial in encouraging and enabling them to share the experience with their wives / partners, and join in with the care of a new baby with confidence.

Objectives

With reference to the issues above, the following objectives were set for the project:

- to make contact with fathers, or those approaching fatherhood, and start a database of contact details
- consult fathers about their needs, as perceived by them

- plan and pilot a piece of work - a short course or a series of thematic meetings
- evaluate the findings from the above and prepare a report to include recommendations for ways forward with the work in readiness to hand over to a designated worker for fathers.

The Process

Three male youth & community workers were recruited to help with outreach work. This created a core 'Working with Fathers' project team. Meetings were held to discuss strategies for making contact with fathers and ways of engaging them in Sure Start provision.

Meetings were also arranged with managers of aspects of the Sure Start programme that had been indicated to be those which would be most useful for fathers to engage in.

Out of these meetings came the following possible options :

- meetings for new fathers / courses in parenting / child development; a rolling programme of short courses could be set up to pick up expectant and new fathers every few months.
- setting up an ongoing fathers group - for mutual support, could be self programming, arranging activities or requesting information sessions as appropriate
- courses for personal development, [possibly along lines of the 'Training for Life' which had been run for mothers], language courses, first level skills courses to aid employability or access to further training

Strategies for contacting and consulting fathers were considered. Families of new babies are automatically contacted and visited by Sure Start staff which would provide access to the target group. However, at this stage, it was also important to consult fathers of older children, who could look back on their experience and describe the difficulties, reflect on their needs at the time and suggest how they might have been met.

Other approaches to developing work with fathers were looked at. A recently appointed Fathers' worker in a neighbourhood adjacent to the Ocean was visited. One of the outreach workers and the project leader visited a training session for fathers on parenting from an Islamic perspective held in a room attached to a mosque. The meeting was the first of ten sessions to be delivered by the author of a recently published book on parenting.

Research into work with fathers was referred to and a training workshop attended by some members of the team, to develop a conceptual framework.

It was felt important to try to make an immediate impact by holding a meeting or event at which Fathers could both be informed and consulted. The publicity for such an occasion serving to raise the profile of Sure Start and its concern to involve fathers within the community at large, regardless of actual attendance at the event.

The event would serve both as launch & publicity for the future work with fathers and as an opportunity for research.

An event to be held the Saturday of the weekend within which Fathers' Day fell was decided on. This provided a focus, the idea of an event for fathers would not seem arbitrary on that weekend, and a day of activities for fathers with their children would be more attractive than a meeting. It was also felt that this would reflect the positive approach of Sure Start and introduce the Sure Start team and their work in an informal context.

Meetings were held with members of the Sure Start team to seek advice about local venues and activities and organisations which had been found to be successful in the past. Though there was a reluctance to stereotype, it was considered important to find activities in which men were more likely to feel comfortable participating.

From the suggestions discussed an organisation which runs music workshops using instruments from many cultures seemed ideal, a fathers' event also seemed to be the perfect opportunity for promoting Sure Start's home safety initiative and Tower Hamlets 'Health Walkers' scheme.

Personal contacts of the father's project team brought in a community sports organisation experienced in family sports sessions and a 'New' games [i.e. non competitive large group games] organisation with extensive experience in inner London and which has also worked with street children in Bangladesh.

Preparation for the Event

The following were considered to be key to establishing the ethos of the day:

- Important to be staffed largely by men
- All activities must be suitable for participation by all ages.

A detailed account of the planning and delivery of the event is included in appendices 1, 2 & 3

Publicity

The Sure Start network was used to publicise the event and posters and leaflets were displayed in local community organisations, schools and shops.

The publicity was not just about attracting fathers to the event, but drawing attention to Sure Start and its relevance to fathers, it was also the beginning of a network for the focus on fathers which will provide a context for the work of the specialist Sure Start worker.

Registration

Comprehensive contact details would be collected at registration as the beginning of a database of local fathers.

Interviews

The main role of the outreach workers was to engage as many fathers as possible in interviews to gain information which would be useful in assessing the concerns of fathers, and the level of interest in being involved in future initiatives. [A 'chat list' was devised to structure the interviews, a copy of which is included as appendix 4]

All fathers were to be invited to a short meeting planned for the following Saturday, to follow up on the responses.

Staffing

It was considered important to have mainly men staffing the event. We were unable to get male crèche workers but fourteen men were brought in. They included the Sure Start director, the project team leader, the three outreach workers, one New Games worker, one Community Sports leader, the music workshop organiser, the Shaftsbury Society representative [home safety and security], a Healthy Walkers team member, two volunteers and two youth volunteers. Four community wardens and the NDC director also made a commitment to be present to offer support and practical help if required. Five women staff would be present. It was necessary to have some women as fathers would bring daughters. It was also anticipated that, despite all references in the publicity being to men, that some mothers would come. The women staff included one Non- competitive Games worker, one Community Sports leader, the two-crèche workers, and one member of the Fathers' Project team.

Activities

It was intended that activities involve fathers and children playing and learning together.

Toys would be available and their use supervised by crèche workers. This was to provide an opportunity for fathers to play with their children. For those who don't often get the chance to do this, the crèche workers could give guidance about questions, suggestions, and the level of intervention appropriate from adults, and help parents to have realistic expectations of their children.

Balloons and a gas cylinder were ordered.

Refreshments

A generous lunch for sixty was ordered, consisting of items such as samosas, pakoras and kebabs and including vegetarian choices. Water, fruit juice and biscuits were to be available throughout the day.

Information

Leaflets and posters on a range of appropriate subjects were ordered.

Contingency plans

It was impossible to predict the numbers who might attend, and we had to be prepared for bad weather - in which case we would lose use of the garden and playground. Contingency plans were drawn up to ensure that the day would be worthwhile and enjoyable for those who came, no matter how few; and that everyone who came could be welcomed, no matter how many. [See appendix 2]

The Event – 14th June

The day was bright and hot.

Balloons and posters were tied to the railings outside the venue. Outreach workers stood by the door to welcome those arriving.

Registration was set up, staffed by the project team leader [who could help with translation for Bangladeshi speakers if necessary], the Sure Start director and an experienced volunteer.

Tables were set up with water, fruit juice and plates of sweet and savoury biscuits.

Forty adults registered, 36 from the target group, including two or three grandfathers, but also three women [not with their husbands] and one uncle from outside the area, and more than 50 children, aged 18 months to 13 years. They arrived between 11.15 am and 1.30 p.m.

Lunch - was brought forward to about 12.30 as people had begun to ask for it. There was a brief break when activities stopped, but they resumed quickly after staff had eaten.

Activities - went more or less according to plan, a detailed description of how they proceeded is included in appendix 3.

Information was displayed re: Sure Start, Schools and Education services in Tower Hamlets, the Connexions service for teenagers, male & family health, home safety and security. [Details appendix 3]

Interviews - the long term value of the event depended on the quality of the interviews carried out by the outreach workers. Using the 'chatlist' format [appendix 4] the workers spent the whole day engaging as many fathers as possible in one to one conversations. They were very successful in establishing a rapport and conducted in depth interviews with 17 fathers. They gathered useful information about their concerns and essential contact details to use as a starting point for further work. All were invited to attend a meeting to be held at Sure Start the following Saturday morning.

Follow up meetings

We were prepared for about 12 to attend the following Saturday but it would be difficult to accommodate so many. Six would be sufficient to conduct a useful meeting on which to build.

Seven men turned up with 6 children aged three to seven; a structured discussion was conducted with responses recorded on a flip chart. [See appendix 5] The children sat round a table in the middle of the group drawing and playing with toys.

The discussion was felt to be very useful, both in terms of these particular fathers' feelings and circumstances and how they perceived others' possible interest and concerns, and the extent to which it was reasonable to expect involvement in Sure Start initiatives.

There seemed to be a desire and the commitment to meet again so a further meeting was arranged for the next Saturday. However there was a feeling in the group that Sundays were likely to be easier for more men. There was also a concern amongst the project staff that we should not be implying at this stage that an ongoing support group was going to be established, if this was seen to be a need it was something to hand over to the specialist worker. Alternatively there was the fear that these men may feel too much was expected of them as a consultative group, they must not feel they were being obliged to give their time.

The Following Saturday two men came, bringing three children. One to one conversations were held. These were very useful for the project, what became clear was that there are very different needs amongst fathers, reflected in the very different circumstances of these two men. They also confirmed that Sundays would generally be a better time for more men.

Findings

These are based on the interviews, discussions and conversations held with fathers during the event and at the two meetings, on feedback from the two

community outreach workers who did door to door visits, on observation of fathers with their children at the event and at the meetings, on feedback from Sure Start staff, and discussions with the Community Warden Team and NDC staff.

- What was heard and observed confirmed that generally fathers are concerned for their children's well being and their futures, they want to have positive relationships with their children and to support them in their development.

While the fathers we encountered were, by the very fact of their presence, those we may assume to be participant in their families, there was nothing to suggest that they were atypical. They did not seem to consider themselves unusual, though within this study we must allow for them being more aware and more confident in their role as father in that they had become involved, compared with others who may not have understood the significance of a specific focus on fathers or may not have felt comfortable being alone outside the home with their children or perhaps feared they would be observed and judged.

Appendix 4 records the responses in discussion at the first meeting. The men spoke for themselves but also talked about the feelings and experiences of peers and gave a view as to why fathers may not sometimes be so involved in their children's lives or able to join in community activities.

- The majority community on the Ocean is Muslim, and for the men attending Mosque is central to the day on Friday. Saturdays are also difficult for many fathers as that is the main day for shopping and visiting friends and relatives. Initiatives focusing on fathers, therefore, are better planned for days other than Fridays and Saturdays.
- Evenings are difficult for some fathers because of the nature of their work, It may be necessary to offer some opportunities for fathers during the day, midweek.
- Most children in this community are in nuclear or extended families, the project did not focus on single or separated parents as a project for fathers might have in some communities. One of the fathers who came to the meetings served as a reminder that there would be fathers on the Ocean who are primary and sometimes sole carers and others who are separated from their children and need support and opportunities to enable them to play a meaningful role in their children's lives.
- Contact with Community wardens provided information about anxieties about teenage behaviour and communication/identity problems between parents, particularly fathers, and their children, the generation gap being not just one of age but also often of language and culture.
- Some fathers have personal development needs which if met would benefit the whole family. Several expressed a desire to improve their English and some wanted vocational courses and careers advice.

- Being better informed and more involved in ante-natal education and services would help men to be more confident and understanding in supporting their wives through pregnancy and in the care of a new baby.
- Whole family outings proved popular with fathers when Sure Start took families out on day trips during summer.

Recommendations

It is important that whatever is offered to men is done so in such a way that it is seen as an opportunity and not as an accusation.

1] Ante / post- natal and Early Years courses

The contributions at the first meeting [as recorded in the appendix] expressed the need of fathers to be informed and to share in the experience of their partners. If Sure Start can find the right way to approach men to engage them in a series of meetings or a short course of a session per week for three to five weeks the basics of this could be achieved. If the sessions are delivered in an holistic way such a course could serve as the introduction to an ongoing association with Sure Start. Fathers could look forward to being invited to future meetings / courses that build on this, taking place at six to eight month intervals addressing the stages of development of their child, describing normal or expected behaviour and ways in which the father can encourage / consolidate this. The main aim being a growing understanding between father and child and a mutually supportive relationship between parents.

Details of possible content and how such a programme may proceed can be found in appendix 6.

2] Play and Learn sessions for Fathers and Children

Weekend sessions would focus on language and reading skills developed through play. Experienced staff would demonstrate how adults / parents could facilitate learning through play. A six week pilot project would provide an indication of the viability of such a scheme.

3] Personal development courses for fathers

Interest was expressed in the possibility of training in:

IT skills, Job seeking skills and strategies, English language classes

4] Family Outings

Following the success of the family days out during the summer, it may be worth considering a programme of seasonal events and outings, particular

effort could be made to attract fathers and some attention given to the role they might play.

5] Mothers' Day

Staff discussed the possibility of holding a Mothers' Day event, [not necessarily to co-inside with Mothering Sunday] a day of activities and relaxation for mothers, good food and a film or some other form of entertainment. Fathers would take responsibility for the children who would all go on an outing or have a Fun Day. Ideally a fathers group would be involved in the planning for this.

6] Specific provision for single and separated fathers

Fathers with little access to their children may have specific needs which are best met separately from other lone fathers. An ongoing support group, possibly self running, may be appropriate for some fathers in these circumstances. One father was very clear that though he needed help and advice regarding access to his child, what he wanted from Sure Start was not an opportunity to talk but to enjoy the little time he had with his child in constructive activities, in the company of other children and parents. Single fathers should be made welcome and encouraged to join in whole family events and outings, but for some this might not be comfortable and special provision for fathers may sometimes be helpful. As the numbers in these circumstances are likely to be very small, there should be the flexibility to adapt and change the type and means of support offered according to individual and small group need and interest.

7] The formation of a consultative group

To keep in touch with fathers and to reflect their needs within Sure Start's services, it may be useful to bring together a consultative and planning group on similar lines to the Parent's Forum. Otherwise, encouraging more fathers to become involved in the forum could have an impact.

8] Develop work with other organisations in the community

Draw on, and promote within, work with fathers in other community organisations, possibly develop joint initiatives. For example the St Dunstan's Home School Link Project, and possibly the Community Wardens team who have expressed an interest in working with fathers.

9] Further Research

More specific information would be useful regarding fathers' experiences with services relating to birth and early years. If a rolling programme of sessions for fathers is to be established, research could roll alongside it, findings constantly modifying content and delivery of the sessions.

A possible approach to gathering the experiences and feelings of fathers, and relating this to the needs and experiences of mothers can be found in appendix 7.

Appendix 1

Planing and Delivery of the Event

Planning

Premises - Dame Colet House, a venue close to Sure Start and well known in the local community was booked. The spaces available included a hall, kitchen and garden, and an astro-turfed playground [belonging to another organisation in the adjacent premises] which would need to be accessed by leaving the building and using an entrance round the corner.

Catering - local caterers known to Sure Start were used, halal finger food for 60 was ordered in the hope that there would be at least 30 fathers with one or two children each. It was decided to issue a ticket at registration for each person, to be handed in at the point at which lunch was served so that it could be fairly distributed. After everyone had been served, surplus food could be put out for people to help themselves.

Activities to be provided - crèche, sports, games, music, art,

Information to be available - Sure Start provision, home safety and security, education, family and male health

Shaftesbury Society – home safety and security; the Society has information leaflets and a display of equipment. They will visit a home to advise on safety and risks in the home. For very low cost they will make a home secure.

Tower Hamlets Healthy Walkers were booked to set up a stand and promote their activities, the sort of thing fathers might do with their children, short walks with a group encouraging appreciation of the environment and local facilities e.g. parks, city farm, museums. Gentle exercise, fun and learning, meeting others from the wider Tower Hamlets community constitute the key areas of the Society's programme activities.

Staffing - important to have mainly men, we would have liked to have had male crèche workers but none were available. There were 14 men to staff the event. They included the Sure Start director, the project team leader, the 3 outreach workers, 1 New Games worker, 1 Community Sports leader, the music workshop organiser, the Shaftesbury Society representative [home safety and security], a Healthy Walkers team member, 2 volunteers and 2 youth volunteers. Four community wardens and the NDC director also made a commitment to be present to offer support and practical help if required. Five women staff would be present. It was necessary to have some women as fathers would bring daughters. It was also anticipated that, despite all references in the publicity being to men, that some mothers would come. The women included one New games worker, one Community Sports leader, the two crèche workers, and one member of the Fathers' Project team. Badges were prepared to identify the event staff.

First Aid – someone qualified in first aid had to be on site for the day - the sports leaders fulfilled this requirement.

Publicity

Leaflets and posters were prepared and printed. These were displayed and distributed from the Friday of the week preceding the event. Local shops throughout the area were asked to put up posters. Schools were visited; posters and leaflets were left for display. Community facilities such as the Housing Office, the City Farm and venues known to provide for pre-school children and families were contacted and given leaflets and posters. Community Wardens helped distribute leaflets to homes and to parents

outside schools, New Deal for Communities expressed interest and introduced two active members of the local community who delivered leaflets in person, knocking on doors, talking to people, gathering responses to feed back to the project. The Youth and Community workers also took part in this outreach work and handed out leaflets to men as they left the mosque on the Friday afternoon before the event.

Sure Start staff gave out leaflets and encouraged fathers to attend when visiting homes and at the office.

Using the local print shop proved important. It was here that a chance meeting led to the contact with the Community Wardens and through them the NDC. The print shop is not only used by organisations and businesses but also a constant stream of residents calls in to use the photocopier. This was an opportunity not only to invite men to the event, but also to explain the work of Sure Start. The print shop owner offered to hand out leaflets during the week.

Plan for the day

Registration

All fathers would be asked to complete a Sure Start registration form on arrival which would require name and address, number and ages of children. Staff would be available to offer assistance if wanted. They would be given a lunch ticket for each member of their party.

Activities

It was envisaged that the games staff would be ready to operate from 11.00 and would seek to draw in fathers and children as they arrived. The music workshop would set up for 11.30. The community sports team would be ready to pick up those not absorbed by the games and music and start team sports as the numbers grew and the need arose. Also if the games and music staff needed a break and if numbers did not merit running all three activities at the same time, the community sports team would take over. The crèche and the art table would be set up ready for 11.00.

Interviews

A 'chat list' was devised to provide a structure for informal interviews. All staff except the youth volunteers would have copies of this, to help introduce a conversation and to gain the sort of information needed to assess the concerns of fathers and the level of interest in being involved in future initiatives for fathers.

The main role of the outreach workers was to engage as many fathers as possible in such conversation and to note key points according to the structure of the 'chat list'.

[See appendix 1]

All fathers were to be invited to a short meeting planned for the following Saturday, to follow up on the responses.

Lunch

Planned to be served about 1.00. If numbers were large some activities would continue in order to stagger the demand for food and seating, if numbers were small everything would stop so that lunch would be a time to socialise, and maybe the right time for the Sure Start director to speak to the whole group.

Appendix 2

Contingency Plans.

It was impossible to predict the numbers who might attend.

If numbers were small activities would be run one after the other each involving everyone present. Advantage would be taken of the opportunity for in depth consultation with individuals, and the chance to demonstrate learning through play by focusing on the children during the activities. All staff would

participate to help generate an atmosphere and help fathers feel less inhibited. It was determined that the day would be worthwhile and enjoyable for those who came, no matter how few.

While too few would be a great disappointment and wasteful of time and resources, too many could be more of a problem.

The food would be sufficient for up to 50 adults and their children, extra fruit juice and bottled water, sweet and savoury biscuits and raisins would be brought, if necessary one of the staff could go out to buy additional items like samosas.

The New Games could keep up to 20 occupied at any one time, the sports probably up to 40 with sufficient support with organisation; the music workshop up to 15 and would attract an audience; the arts table could cope with up to 6 children with 2 or 3 adults; the crèche up to 6 children with 2 or 3 adults. Meanwhile there would be the stands offering information to be accessed and the youth and community workers would be interviewing as many fathers as possible. While the crèche and art table would remain accessible at all times, the staff supervising the other activities would need breaks.

Tower Hamlets Healthy Walkers had offered to set up a walk for the day. First thoughts were that it was preferable to keep everyone on site, however if more than expected came, taking groups out on one or two walks could be a way of coping with excess numbers.

Another possibility was to send some of those arriving round the corner to the play ground entrance where they could be involved in sports, a second registration point could be set up here if necessary. With these plans in place, the team felt reasonably confident that there would be no risk of having to turn people away. A large group could be spread across the spaces available holding a group in the playground until some had left or the groups were ready to change activity, and taking a group off site for a walk if necessary.

If it rained the hall could accommodate the music workshop and games, the art table and information stalls, and probably could cope with up to 30 adults plus their children. The crèche could be operated in the adjacent room designed for the purpose. This would release a little more space and take a few people out of the hall. If the numbers became too great only the music workshop would operate involving as many as possible - as spectators if not as performers. Young children would be encouraged to play in the crèche, older ones to join in the art work, each of which would be much more organised than intended, with all staff putting their time into ensuring that this worked. Food would be served early; groups who had eaten and participated, albeit briefly, in something, would be encouraged to go. It could be explained that due to the weather the day couldn't go ahead as planned and would finish early.

Everyone would be contacted about a future event. The day would still have

served its purpose in collecting contacts, and everyone hopefully engaged positively for a short time. Balloons, small model animals and miniature boxes of raisins were available to be given to children if the day offered little to them by way of entertainment.

It was essential that everyone who arrived was welcomed. Turning adults away, albeit taking their names with a promise of being contacted for a future event, would have been difficult, but disappointing children was unthinkable and could not be associated with Sure Start.

Appendix 3

How the activities operated on the day

The music workshop turned out to be just drums. While not what we were

expecting it worked extremely well. The drums were set up in the garden; fathers and children joined in readily, the staff member from the music organisation encouraging enthusiastic participation. At the end of the day all those who had participated in the drumming were gathered together and performed for everyone present bringing the day to a close, creating the ideal moment for the director to address the whole group, briefly describing the work of Sure Start and its commitment to involving fathers.

The non-competitive games also commenced in the garden, moving to the playground when more space was required. The games involved a parachute and a huge inflated globe, again the enthusiasm of the supervising staff encouraged participation, children calling out the names of international cities as 'homes' for the games.

The sports were successful in attracting a cross section of participation, having a young woman member of staff was significant in encouraging girls to join in cricket and football, and helped to break down possible gender stereotypes.

The art table was positioned by a wall covered in white paper, written across the top 'Help us to make a pattern' and 'How high can you reach?' Ready cut shapes in different sizes and colours, wax crayons, felt tips, Pritt sticks and lots of coloured paper were available. The volunteer supervising the table was prepared to speak to children about choosing shapes and colours, helping young children to stick shapes on the wall, encouraging fathers to help their children to draw their ideas, make patterns, add them to the wall.

The information stalls had leaflets about Sure Start services, choosing schools and accessing education support services in Tower Hamlets, health education focusing on male and child health issues. Information about Connexions was also displayed. This service is directed at secondary school children and offers support with personal and family problems, schoolwork and career planning.

A specific display was set up by the Shaftesbury Society demonstrating home safety measures which can easily be put into effect at low cost. The society will assess a home's safety and security needs, and will provide and install locks and devices for a fraction of the commercial cost.

Low energy light bulbs supplied by London Electricity were given away to enable a light to be left on in hallways during the night - a deterrent to intruders and a safety measure for members of the household when they get up in the night. A light on the landing would reassure young children and give them confidence to get up in the night.

The Tower Hamlet's Healthy Walkers withdrew at the last minute; this was worrying as they were a part of the contingency plan for coping with large numbers, but luckily this was not a problem.

Appendix 4

'Chat list'
Fathers' Day

No. _____

Do you know about Sure Start ? - [has someone already spoken to you]

It's about trying to give a good start for all young children, in health and education, so that they are ready for school and can make the most of opportunities

the Sure Start project is there to support parents, to provide information, help if it's needed

mothers have contact with lots of services when they have a baby, but children need their fathers too

we need to know the concerns you have as a father, what sort of information would be helpful to you, how do you think Sure Start might be useful to you,

would you be interested in meeting with other fathers to find out about the services available for young children and their families? a chance to ask questions, discuss concerns ?

[mention the meeting planned - 28th June, if appropriate]

if we have more fathers' meetings or run a short course what sort of time / day do you think would be most likely to suit fathers, what would suit you best?

useful info. would be...

concerns expressed...

other comments -

best times.....

[
can I take your name? -

contact no. / address -

We are having a meeting at the Sure Start office next Saturday at 11 o'clock for fathers with children under two, to talk about providing opportunities for fathers - to get information, go on courses, to become involved in parents consultative groups

List of those with children under 2 who express interest:
[make a firm invitation]

Appendix 5

Fathers meeting [1] - Saturday 21st June '03

What are your hopes / expectations for your children?

Good health
good education
good behaviour

lots of activities
lots of opportunities

to have confidence in themselves
in the world
[security]

a lack of fear

to be able to communicate across cultures

knowledge / insight / strength

What are your fears for your children?

That they may be bullied

falling behind in school

truancy / school refusal

drug use / addiction

that they may lose contact / grow away from, their family

the environment may be hostile / unhealthy

the limit of parents protection

What do you believe is your role in enabling your children and protecting them from the things you fear?

set aside time to be with your children

talk to them / listen to them

give them guidance / they should know right from wrong

be involved with schools

gain access to information re schools [demand more? or take more interest?]

check children's rooms [for signs of drug use or other problems]

be friendly

be a model - a good example [general]
~ ~ of breaking down barriers - in relationships / between cultures

Who / where did you get information from when you were expecting your first child?

family / older brothers [sometimes father ?]

health services - not always helpful - can be difficult to ask

library / books - inc. health service books

What sort of information would have helped you when you were expecting your first child / when your children were very young?

physical development of mother and child during pregnancy

what happens during birth and early days for mother and baby

emotional changes for mother - .. and father

need to understand about post-natal depression

Are there training opportunities / things which Sure Start could do, that you feel would help?

would be good for fathers to be invited to classes for mother, to attend appointments with mother

opportunities for fathers to talk together could be useful, this is good

Are there training opportunities which you feel would enable you to create more opportunities for your family?

child development / ESOL / life skills [for work, to deal with authorities e.g., schools, police, Drs, the council]

Fathers meeting [2] - Saturday 28th June '03

[These notes were to prompt discussion in the second meeting, moving on to looking at the importance of play as the basis for learning and relationship

building. The meeting did not happen as planned, there were just two fathers and their children, one to one conversations were held.]

Recap on last week

Sure Start is here to provide information / support to parents, what sort of things do you think it could do to meet the needs of new / young parents? [documents / meetings / courses - for fathers / couples?]

Things you felt would be useful:

for new fathers - opportunities to find out / understand physical and emotional issues for mother / family during pregnancy and with new baby - SS can do this - tell new fathers

as children get older concerned that they maintain good health, cope well in school, stay close to their family, stay out of trouble [particular concern about drugs], become strong and confident, can handle the environment they are in though might be hostile / fear of bullying, resist pressure to join in risky activities e.g. drugs

what can you do as parents / fathers ? and what can SS do to support you ?

- build strong relationship

know how to prepare them for / support them at, school

you had the answers - spend time with your children, talk / listen, share activities - not always easy for fathers

SS can help focus - importance of play - different types of play important for different sorts of learning

with young children gross motor - run and jump, climb and balance, swing and slide, throw and catch, support own body weight

creative play - looking at books, listening to stories, making up stories, drawing, painting, building, cutting, sticking, singing, being noisy

Appendix 6

Fathers information sessions / short course.

Picking up the referrals from medical services, all prospective fathers could be contacted, ideally before the birth and invited to attend a meeting or a short course. Subject matter to be covered:

- foetal development and birth, the importance of maternal health and nutrition, what to expect of the hospital / medical services, the possibility of post natal depression, what to expect, what is normal, where to seek advice / help
- breastfeeding and infant health, sleep and rest – for mother and child, development up to 6 months, addressing those needs which are essential to future development, physical contact, verbal and non-verbal communication, early toys, music etc.

If fathers are more knowledgeable about pregnancy / birth / early development, and the physical and emotional needs of the mother; if they are involved during the ante and post-natal period, they will be better able to support the mother and participate in the care and development of their children, and more likely to create their own bond which would be the basis for developing a constructive relationship with their children / family.

This first series of meetings could be followed up at 6 months with the next stage of development, looking at the beginnings of speech, books for babies, preparation for walking, safety in the home.

Responses and feedback from fathers will hopefully have indicated the level of interest and what might be possible, a third series offered at a year to eighteen months could consider the balance between the need for safety with the need for a toddler to explore and take risks. The need to run, climb and jump, to have access to a challenging environment and equipment, to develop gross motor skills, physical strength and confidence.

At this stage, or may be a little later, it would be useful to have a session or two about finding constructive ways to cope with a child striving for independence and struggling with the frustration of the limitations of its own ability and the constraints imposed in the interests of safety or social necessity.

As the child approaches two and three years parents need to be informed about the opportunities available for socialising with other children and the ways they can help their child be ready for school, confident and prepared for learning.

A judgement would need to be made by the workers how about how best to deliver sessions as the child / children become older, it may still be most useful to offer fathers their own sessions. While it might seem positive for mothers and fathers to look at the needs of their growing child together, men may withdraw and feel their presence is not necessary in a mixed group. There would also be practical issues of childcare if both parents are out

together, and of accommodation if the groups become bigger and children are present or occupied in a crèche.

This proposal would mean that fathers are first engaged in Sure Start within the last four months of pregnancy, the programme would include:

two or three sessions before birth
two or three soon after birth
two at about six months
two at twelve to eighteen months
two between two & three years

Sessions would be two to two and a half hours long, informal with light refreshments, and appropriate literature provided. Timing would take account of most likely availability of Fathers. Such a scheme demands little of the men's time but keeps them in touch with Sure Start, even if they do not attend. The meetings would not only provide information but an opportunity to meet other fathers, to talk to professionals and to remind them of the services Sure Start offers.

The sessions would involve several elements of the Sure Start project - Midwives, Health Visitors and the Breastfeeding project for the early sessions, the Speech and Language and Book projects in the later sessions, the behaviour project throughout - raising awareness about the child's social and emotional developmental needs, suggesting strategies for positive responses as the child becomes more independent.

Appendix 7

Further research

Discussions need to be held with Midwives:

What support do mothers need? What support is given by midwives? What can be done by husbands or other family members? Are they invited to antenatal classes? do they attend? are the proposed sessions with fathers going to duplicate anything already offered ?

Structured interviews with Fathers:

Tracking a number of fathers could produce useful information but may be difficult to follow through beyond the first two stages.

1. New fathers to be interviewed before birth - what are their expectations? how do they imagine their life will change? what will their responsibilities be as a father? what will they do to help their wife / partner during her pregnancy and after the birth.
2. Interviews two or three months after the birth - what has the experience been like? how was it different from expectations? how could you have been better prepared? did you attend any antenatal classes? would you have attended a class for men only? was language an issue in communicating with the hospital / medical services? what is your role now? what responsibilities do you take?
3. Interviews two years later or after the birth of a second child - many of the same questions - what are their feelings now as an experienced father? have they or their wife and child / children been involved in any Sure Start activities/ courses? What has been most helpful from their experience of the range of services? What could be done to enable fathers to be well prepared and confident in taking an active role in the care of their young family?

Tracking is a long-term approach, for a more rapid return these three stages could be simultaneously applied to a cross section of fathers currently in these circumstances.

Structured interviews with mothers:

Mothers who have recently given birth, both first time and those with one or more children, to be asked what they have found most difficult in coping with pregnancy, birth and the new born / young children? What would help to make things easier? where do they think that help could / should come from? How have their husbands / family helped? What sort of help would they have liked from their husband / partner? Do they think that more information and opportunities for fathers to be involved would make a difference? Do they have any suggestions for Sure Start or other services to consider?

