

## SURE START RAVENSDALE

### EARLY START -BABY TALK EVALUATION

#### INTRODUCTION

Early Start- Baby Talk is a family-learning programme funded by the Basic Skills Agency. The aims are to provide support for families on issues around speech and language and to support parents/carers with literacy and numeracy problems. Early Start provided course materials and session plans and stationary for the registration and assessment of parents. A total budget of £4500 was awarded to cover staffing, room hire and resources costs.

The programme ran for 12 x 3hour sessions from January to March 2002 with a total of 13 adult participants and 19 children. Some of these were from outside the area and most were very capable. The programme was offered to all parents of a baby (under 1) in Ravensdale.

This programme illustrates the core and cluster interagency working which is typical in Sure Start Ravensdale, as we try to best meet the needs of the parent carers. 11 workers were directly involved in session operation with support from play workers in the crèche.

This evaluation examines the value of interagency working and staff perception of impact on families. Feedback from the parents (which is very positive) is reported elsewhere.

#### METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was distributed to all staff involved in leading sessions to seek their views on the process and content.

Results were collated and discussed with the 2 main organisers.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Planning and effects on workers (Summary of Questionnaire results)

- Everyone was clear what was required of them and saw Paula and Liz as being responsible for the whole programme and it's planning.
- Involvement in Baby Talk enabled everyone to meet targets and performance measures for their work although they could have been met more specifically if more parents had been from Ravensdale.
- All workers felt it was a good use of their time, but would like it to be more focussed on attracting the 'hard to reach' and to have the programme better defined.
- Everyone found Baby Talk a useful learning experience for themselves: - in working with different people, improving facilitation skills, identifying needs and reinforcing aspects of caring for babies.
- Individual sessions were planned between the workers responsible (usually 2 people) and this working together was seen as positive in itself. In the future more involvement from the play workers at the planning stage would be useful.
- Paperwork was repetitive and time consuming; the Basic Skills Agency didn't provide the necessary forms or sufficient support.
- Workers found it difficult to plan the children's time, joint time and home time because of the length of the sessions. (3 hours). It was a rush to fit everything in. Longer sessions, extra sessions, or covering fewer topics in more detail were suggested, to resolve this.

### Impact on families

The programme ran for 12 sessions with a total of 13 adult participants and 19 children. Some of these were from outside the area and most were very capable. The programme was offered to all parents of a baby (under 1) in Ravensdale.

Evidence of progression was noted in communication skills, confidence to join in the group and parental awareness of children's needs.

The sessions were 'friendly, in a nice atmosphere and parents were relaxed.

The most useful aspects of Early start were seen to be ' the involvement of both parents/children. Excellent way to communicate with all parents, children and workers together'.

All workers felt they would be happy to do something similar in the future.

### CONCLUSIONS

- The Early Start programme was an excellent way to work with parents and children together.
- Evidence of progression was noted in communication skills, confidence to join in the group and parental awareness of children's needs.
- Parent child bonding was increased as was awareness of the importance of eye contact and communicating with the young child.
- The sessions were too short to fit everything in.
- The programme was useful in providing opportunities for workers from different agencies and specialisms to work together.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Future work should be targeted specifically on those who need to improve their communication/Basic Skills and on the 'hard to reach' families.

## RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

### *Evidence of progression in children and adults.*

#### ***Examples of any progression seen in Parents***

- \* Confidence to join in discussions. Meeting with other parents and their children.
- \* Skills - knowledge of weaning and confidence in all areas from talking in a group to interacting with their baby. Communication skills with other adults and their babies.
- \* Discussion on safety issues. Parents' awareness of their role in the wider community. Valuing diversity. Language, computer and communication skills.
- \* Most parents on the course were very capable. Some who had little experience did well with the activities and work was well done.
- \* Parents developed skills in identifying adult interaction in style and observing babies for example.
- \* Parents worked well as a group, which improved communication skills. All were eager to participate.

#### ***Babies***

- \* Hygiene caring for babies was put into practice.
- \* Communication - Coos etc, eye contact with parents/carers.
- \* Babies benefited from the play sessions. Particularly saw evidence of enjoyment of songs/rhymes and anticipation skills.

#### ***Parent child relationships***

- \* Continue to bond.
- \* Increase bonding through eye contact, singing together, parents waiting for the babies to respond (giving them time) giving babies choices.
- \* Observing better positioning of babies on mums knees for interaction and song sessions.

#### ***Were these changes inevitable or were they affected by the experience of Early Start/Sure Start?***

- \* The session was friendly in a nice atmosphere and parents were relaxed in what they were doing. Hopefully parents took information about hygiene in baby's home with them and put it into practice.
- \* Some were inevitable with some parents (e.g. coos, gurgles etc) but Sure Start raised parent's awareness of the importance of/benefits of eye contact, singing

etc. Encouraging parents to do it more often and recognise the difference they are making to their child's development also increased their self-esteem.

- \* Effected by experience of Early Start and Sure Start.
- \* Confidence gained from cooking/shopping was likely to be a result of Early Start.
- \* Of course it was Early Start!
- \* Early Start/Sure Start affected the changes by bringing together people who had not previously met.

***What did you feel were the most useful aspects of Early Start to the parent/carers and children?***

- \* The involvement of both parents/children. Excellent way to communicate with all parents, children and workers all together.
- \* Raised confidence, raised awareness of weaning, safety, post-natal depression etc, increased support networks (peer support), For parents to share skills, knowledge and experiences, children benefited from all the above, children had access to good quality play opportunities, parents and children had time to play, sing together, learn new skills and ideas to take home. Parents had time for themselves - recognised they too have needs.
- \* Adults - confidence, increased skills, working together, awareness of their own role in supporting other in the community.  
Children - Quality time within a stimulating environment.
- \* To think about doing an activity, reconsidering it and then communicating it to others. Interactions they could do with children.
- \* It promotes family learning and the fact that parents are the most important people in developing their child's skills. It brings parents together for support. Lovely atmosphere to learn and develop in for all of us.
- \* Raised awareness of health issues and basic hygiene for parents/carers and babies/children. Encouraged creative skills in group participation.

***The funding for Early Start was provided by the Basic skills Agency in order to improve the literacy/ numeracy/ communication skills of the adults involved.***

***Do you feel this was achieved?***

Yes, for the few that needed any improvement.

## EARLY START EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to decide how successful this course has been and whether to run it again it is important that we have your views on your involvement.

### Your involvement and benefits to you.

When you agreed to be part of Early Start were you clear what was required of you?  
Who did you see as being responsible for the whole programme?

Did your involvement enable you to meet targets or performance measures for your work specifically?

Was this a good use of your time? Would you want to do something similar in the future?

Did you learn anything from this work?

### The planning process and carrying out the sessions.

Who was responsible for planning the whole programme?

Who was involved in planning the individual sessions you were involved with, was this a positive experience for you?

Was this appropriate? Were there other people who should have been involved?

What did you think of the paperwork that you were asked to complete (e.g. session plans and evaluations)?

How easy did you find it to plan the children's time, the joint time and the home time?

Did you get enough support with this work?

### Evidence of progression in children and adults.

Give examples of any progression you saw in

Parents

Baby's

Parent child relationships

Were these changes inevitable or were they affected by the experience of Early Start/Sure Start

### The Future

Was this a good use of your time? Would you want to do something similar in the future?

The sessions were all felt to be too short to fit all the topics in. What would you do about this another time?