



Sure Start Meden Valley

**Report on evaluation and
future planning research for
Stay and Play sessions**

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Meden Valley Sure Start - Report on evaluation and future planning research for Stay and Play sessions

With thanks to the Peer Researchers: Angie Cars, Brian Chippendale, Paula Hattersley, Ian Hill, Rachael Kaoperslei, Jo Silvers, Tracey Thrall, Nichola Tipple, Renee Wooley, and to members of the Stay and Play staff team.

Introduction

A team of two researchers from the School of Applied Social Science at De Montfort University, Jennie Fleming and Elizabeth Barner, were contracted by Sure Start Meden Valley to assist with their evaluation needs, starting in October 2004. This report outlines the first section of that evaluation, which focused on the Stay and Play provision.

What we hoped to learn about Stay and Play

We understood that evaluation of the current Stay and Play sessions was particularly relevant at this time because the completion of a new building, scheduled for February 2005, meant that Stay and Play sessions would have to alter, and the coming of Children's Centres and expansion of area covered meant that there would be a stretch on staff resources. With those changes in mind, the goal for the evaluation was twofold:

1. To gain an overall perspective on the Stay and Play sessions:
What was working for families and what changes they would like?
What impact the sessions might be having on children and families?

2. To help with future planning and expansion:
With the project moving into a new building, and the development of Children's Centres, Meden Valley Sure Start were keen to find out how to use resources in the most effective way.

What we planned and did

In order to learn all of these things, we planned to ask questions of both current Stay and Play attendees and also former users. We worked with a group of parents and carers who helped devise the evaluation, took part as the Peer Researchers and were involved in the analysis of the information collected. A core group of nine parents and carers who were interested in being part of the evaluation came to four training and planning sessions conducted by Jennie and Elizabeth. Some staff members from the Childcare and Play Team and from the Community Development Team attended some training sessions.

During those sessions we talked about what we wanted to learn from users of Stay and Play sessions, how we might get the information we needed, and from whom. We also considered such things as what people would need to know to decide whether to give their views and opinions; consent; confidentiality; how to encourage people to give full answers; recording and

other elements of undertaking a research project. At the same time we created a questionnaire to be used during Stay and Play sessions. This included the areas the parents and carers wanted to cover and also other elements that arose from discussions with the Evaluation sub-group and conversations with members of staff. The parents and carers practised asking the questions and recording the answers. Parents and carers who had attended the trainings acted as Peer Researchers. They attended Stay and Play sessions and asked those attending to answer the questions. The questionnaire (Appendix A) included a cover sheet to remind the Peer Researchers of key prompts, and also to introduce it to people who decided to fill it in on their own.

Jennie and Elizabeth made minor changes to the questionnaire designed by the group, and that questionnaire will be sent to families no longer using Stay and Play sessions as soon as difficulties with the database are sorted out.

We planned for the Peer Researchers to use the questionnaires on two winter trips, and then to attend two weeks' of Stay and Play sessions in order to interview there. It was not possible for interviews to take place on the trips, however all but one of the Peer Researchers attended at least one Stay and Play session, and some attended extra sessions outside of the two weeks we had scheduled. In the end, we understand that the Peer Researchers reached everyone currently attending one of the Stay and Play sessions.

We received 45 completed questionnaires in total. Those were inputted into a simple database that allowed us to compare and contrast answers to the various questions, and to know something about the people who had answered the questionnaires – where they lived, how many children they had, how long they had attended Stay and Play sessions, etc. The Peer Researchers met a final time with Jennie and Elizabeth to discuss the results from the questionnaire. They gave their point of view, both as those who had conducted the interviews and as parents and carers who had been involved with the service. All of the information they gave was invaluable in understanding the picture the questionnaires outlined and interpreting the information collected. A draft of this report was seen by the Play Team, who offered further very useful information.

What we found out

Who took part?

First some information about the people who were interviewed and who filled out questionnaires. As stated earlier, 45 questionnaires were returned, and most of them were complete. At least two of those responding were childminders, and those remaining we believe were in a family relationship with the children, either parents or people who frequently looked after the children. Those responding had between one and three children, with most having one or two. Some people brought two children to the Stay and Play sessions, so 51 children were attending the sessions with the 45 adults who answered the questionnaires. In conversation with the Play Team, we learned that approximately 70 parents or carers currently attend Stay and Play, so we believe we spoke to two-thirds of all those currently attending. According to the Team, there are approximately ten childminders amongst those 70.

We requested that people fill in their postcode so that we would know whether we had received answers from people who lived in all parts of the Sure Start area. Most areas of Mansfield Woodhouse appeared to be represented, including Peafield Lane and the area south of New Mill Lane, as were Market Warsop and Church Warsop. Two families came from beyond Church Warsop, and one from Meden Vale.

The children who attended the Stay and Play groups ranged in age from five months to four years. However, the vast majority (41 of the 51) were between 18 months and three years, with only seven younger than 18 months and only three over three years old. The Play Team indicated that Stay and Play did mainly see toddler-age children, however, in the past week seven newborns had attended one session, and childminders often had multiple ages with them.

Attendance at Stay and Play

All respondents said that they attended Stay and Play sessions weekly except those who answered the questionnaire at their first session. Some people said they attended more than one session each week. A slightly larger number attended one session weekly and others occasionally. Forty-four answered a question about how long they had attended Stay and Play; the answers fall evenly into two major categories: 20 people had been attending for less than four months, and 19 had been attending for more than one year.

When asked if there was a reason they did not attend other Stay and Play sessions, the overwhelming answer (16 answers) was transport and the difficulty of getting to the sessions. Other answers were that they were doing something else or tried to vary the things they did with their children (9 answers), and that the parent or carer was at work during other times (7 answers). A member of the Play team explained that sessions were set up in different areas because transport was known to be difficult and the area is large, and said that the staff did not expect families to attend sessions far from home.

It seemed to be the case that people travelled the minimum distance necessary to reach sessions, with those attending the Mansfield Woodhouse sessions living nearer to venues there and those who attended the Church Warsop sessions living north of Mansfield Woodhouse.

Why families came to Stay and Play

The questionnaire asked what people thought the purpose of Stay and Play was, and also why they had originally come to the sessions. Very few people gave only one answer for the purpose of Stay and Play, seeing the sessions as being multi-purpose. However the majority of people said one purpose of the Stay and Play sessions was for their children to learn to interact with other children. Other frequent answers included adults getting to know each other, children learning and getting ready for nursery, learning to share, and interacting with other adults. Some examples of answers are:

'For children to interact with other children, and parents as well'

'To mix with other children and get them ready for school'

'For children to mix with others and learn different things and for adults to mix'

'Both learning and making new friends'

'As much fun as possible; getting ready for nursery'

When asked why families had first come to Stay and Play, their answers were quite similar. Again answers were complex, including more than one reason, and once more the majority highlighted children learning to interact with other children. A larger number of the answers to this question concentrated more on the needs of the adults involved, though the vast majority of answers to both questions concentrated on the children. Some answers here also referred to the messy play aspects particularly. A few examples are:

'To mix with other adults and for my child to mix and make new friends'

'I was a new parent to my first and only child when I first went to Stay and Play. I went to learn more about being a confident mum by getting advice from other parents and staff'

'To try and get my child to learn more and play with other children'

'To mix my child with younger children and get out of house and mix'

'Didn't know what to expect. Came to do things that you don't encourage at home because of the mess.'

A few people also spoke about coming to Stay and Play because their friends came or because people they knew gave it a good review.

The answers received to these questions seem to show that the expectations families had for the Stay and Play were similar to their understanding of the purpose of the sessions. Parents and carers seemed to have broadly similar thoughts about the purpose of Stay and Play as we understand staff perception to be. Perhaps the difference here is that there was less emphasis from parents and carers on them learning to teach and entertain their children, and more emphasis on children learning social skills, though clearly they felt the sessions were for children and they highlighted children's learning. This is also supported by the small number of suggestions for change, a later question, which included requests for more group activities during the Stay and Play sessions.

Any anxieties?

People were asked about any anxieties they had before coming to Stay and Play, and what had helped them to overcome these. Twelve people named anxieties they had felt. These were often around not knowing anyone in the group and being afraid that the parents, carers or staff might not be friendly. When we discussed the answers to this question with the Peer Researchers after they had finished interviewing, they felt that many people had initially been anxious for this reason, but it had been overcome quickly after they arrived (and since forgotten) because the atmosphere was friendly and welcoming, and sometimes because staff had accompanied people to their first sessions. They said that people had sometimes experienced play groups which did not feel welcoming and it seemed important to many of the people they talked to, and to themselves.

Other causes of anxiety were general lack of confidence, specific fear of strangers and discomfort at the possibility of being the only man present. Besides the general warmth of the reception, people also reported coming with friends as a way to overcome anxiety and the discomfort of not knowing anyone.

What do people like about the Stay and Play sessions?

The questionnaire went on to ask parents and carers what they liked about Stay and Play. It asked simply what respondents like about Stay and Play, and also had specific sections about the venue, day/time, activities and staff. This was a very open question, and the interpretation seems to have been quite broad. Once again respondents did not necessarily choose just one thing they liked, but a combination.

Nearly half of the people who answered this question mentioned that they enjoyed the social aspect for adults – meeting new people, seeing friends, and also enjoyed having a break from being solely responsible for their child. For instance, one person said, 'Can leave to wander but still watch.' It may be that these people interpreted the question as being particularly about them – 'What is good for *you* about Stay and Play?' – as opposed to being an open question about what they observe that might be good for themselves personally as well as for their children. Several people also spoke about being happy to have some concentrated time with their child, particularly if they had more than one child. Other points that were repeated were getting

out of the house, seeing children happy and learning, having plenty for the children to do and getting messy without having to clean up afterwards. Some example answers are:

'Mingle with other carers / parents; activities for children'

'Met other mums; time with just mum and child'

'Messy activities; not alone at home'

'Nice to see my child happy'

'The change in my daughter and getting to know others'

Questions specifically about the venue generally led people to say that they were happy provision was local or close to home. At Turner Hall, they liked that it was big and spacious.

Questions specifically about the day and time of the sessions were almost entirely answered with support for the current days and times. One person said that mornings were better because their child needed to sleep in the afternoons. There was one vote for starting and finishing earlier in order to make the school run, and one person felt a session started too early. One person noted that the regular, reliable day and time was good for the child's routine.

Regarding the activities put on, the majority said that they were very happy with the variety of activities. Other responses were that the children enjoyed them and they were very messy. Very few people offered suggestions, when they did, these included more varied toys for the floor and for younger children; introduction of the activities; more group activities; dance; swimming for children.

Answers to the questions specifically about staff were very positive: almost all who replied said that staff were very friendly, and many also felt they were helpful. There were some comments specifically about being welcoming, and there were no suggestions for changes.

What benefits Stay and Play brings families

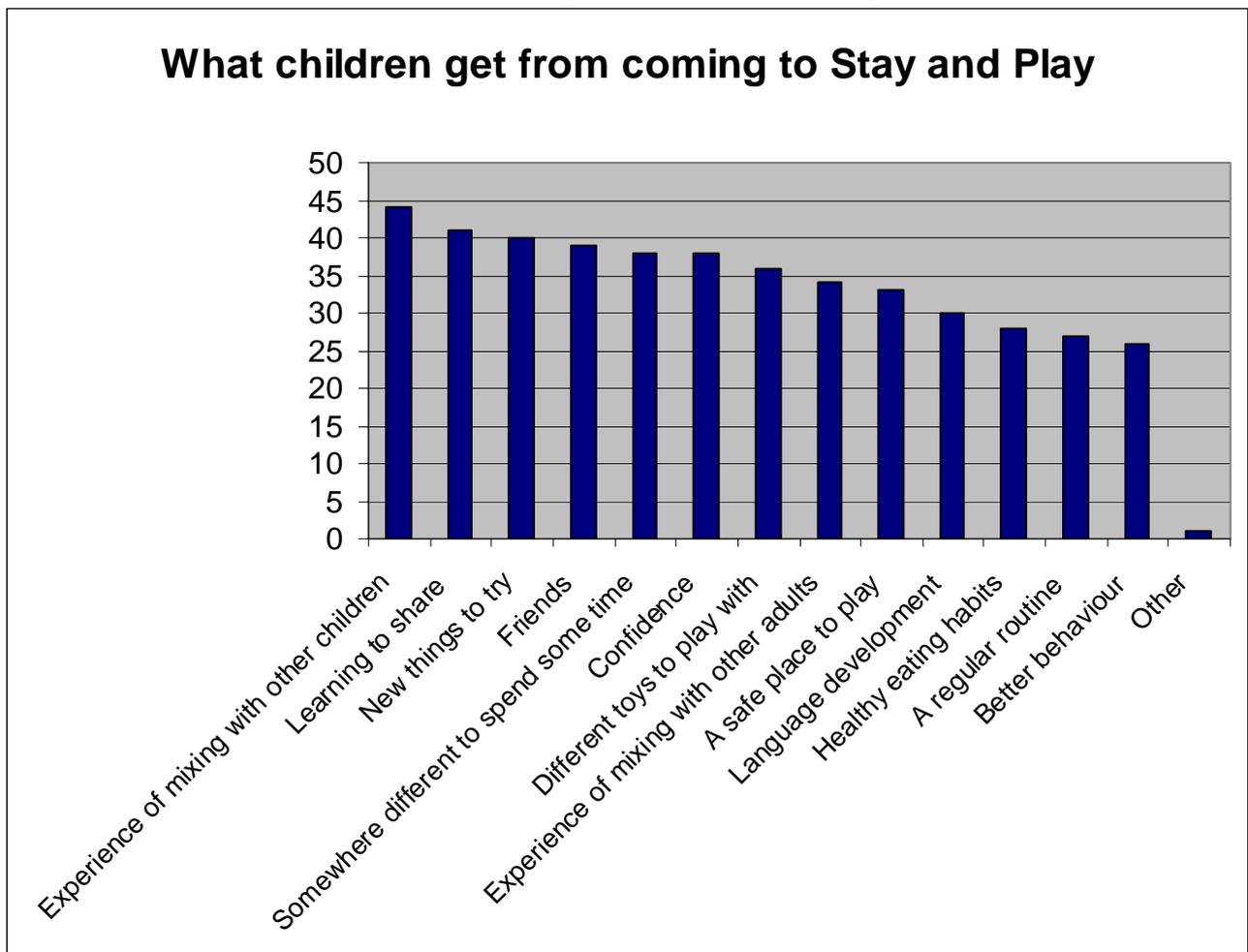
First, respondents were asked whether they thought their children gained from coming to the Stay and Play sessions, and if so what they thought the benefits for the children were. We went on to ask about benefits to themselves, impact on their families and changes made at home.

What respondents thought children gained from attending

Attendees were asked to tick boxes describing what they thought their children gained from attending Stay and Play sessions. There were 13 options, plus 'Other':

- Somewhere different to spend some time
- Language development
- Experience of mixing with other children
- Experience of mixing with other adults
- Confidence
- Friends
- Learning to share
- Better behaviour
- Different toys to play with
- New things to try
- A safe place to play
- A regular routine
- Healthy eating habits

Forty-four people answered this question. On average, they chose 10 answers from the list of 13 (most people ticked most boxes). Everyone who answered chose the 'Experience of mixing with other children' as a benefit. 'Better behaviour' was selected least, but was still chosen by just over half of the respondents, 26 people. The choices are displayed in the chart below with the number of people who thought their children had gained each one.



People were also asked to describe the changes they had seen in their children. Most people answered this question, and the answers varied some

with the amount of time they had been attending sessions, but all were very positive. Those who had been attending Stay and Play for under four months (20 people, about half of those who answered the questionnaires) often noted that their children seemed to enjoy the sessions, that they joined in with the singing, for instance. They observed more confidence in their children and some noted that their children had started to share. Some of these parents' and carers' comments were:

'More confident with adults'

'Enthusiastic to sing and joins in more'

'Seems cheerful when he's playing now he's been coming here; doesn't get so bored at home.'

'Got used to other children and sharing'

For those who had attended longer (21 had attended more than one year) there was a greater strength in the comments about sharing, confidence and interacting with children and adults. There were also many more comments about improvements in speech in this group. Some examples are:

'Started sharing and his speech has come on'

'He's more confident and plays lovely with other kids'

'Brought her out of herself'

'Speech has come on tremendously'

We believe that these represent significant changes for the children involved. The Peer Researchers seemed confident that parents and carers attributed the changes to coming to the Stay and Play sessions, rather than referring to normal child development.

What respondents thought they themselves gained from attending Stay and Play

Again we asked parents and carers to tick answers from a list of 15 choices plus 'other' and then asked what changes they had noticed in themselves. As might be expected, people were more reticent about their needs and changes than they were about their children's, and were not changing as much as the average toddler does over a year. The 15 choices that we thought people might have gained from attending Stay and Play were:

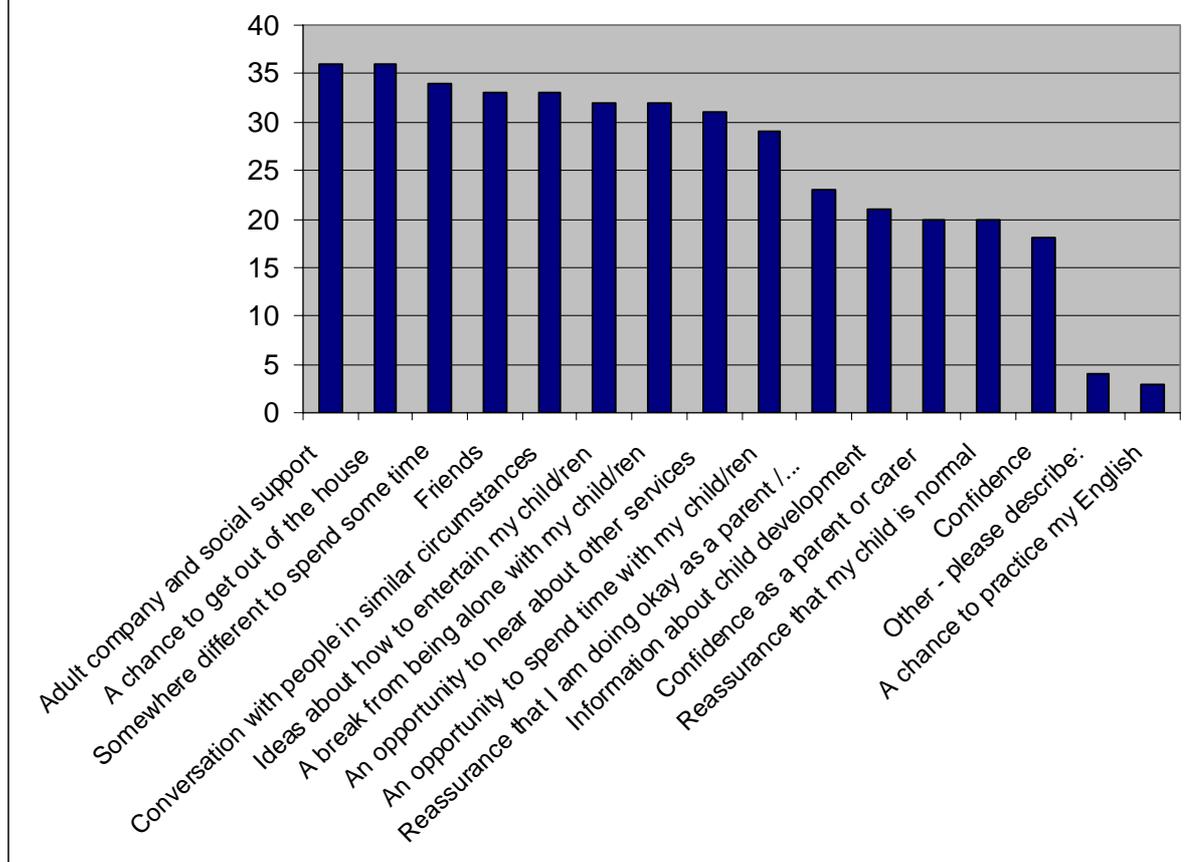
- Confidence
- Friends
- Somewhere different to spend some time
- Adult company and social support
- Conversation with people in similar circumstances

- Information about child development
- Confidence as a parent or carer
- Reassurance that I am doing okay as a parent / carer
- Reassurance that my child is normal
- A chance to get out of the house
- A chance to practise my English
- Ideas about how to entertain my child/ren
- An opportunity to hear about other services
- An opportunity to spend time with my child/ren
- A break from being alone with my child/ren

On average, respondents chose nine of these 15 options that applied to them. Some people chose all options and whilst others chose a carefully selected handful; no one chose fewer than four. The options chosen by the most respondents were 'Adult company and social support' and 'A chance to get out of the house.' These were both chosen by 36 people, out of 44 who answered the question. The option chosen least was 'Confidence,' with 18 people ticking that option. Three people did tick 'A chance to practise my English.' While it is possible that this refers to reading and writing, the Peer Researchers had not interviewed anyone who spoke English as a second language, and that box was only ticked when all other options were also chosen. Thus we believe that it was mistakenly chosen. Four people chose 'Other.' Their comments about what they gained included meeting other mums; a 'change of company' and seeing what other children were like from someone with a first child.

The chart below compares the number of people who chose each option:

What parents and carers get from Stay and Play



The questionnaire then asked the adults to describe any changes they had noticed in themselves since attending Stay and Play sessions with their children. Twenty two said they had noticed changes in themselves. The change most often cited was more confidence, which is especially interesting since 'Confidence' was the option least chosen in the question above, and that 'Confidence as a parent or carer' was not much more frequently chosen. However, fewer people answered this question and all but one of those who said that the change they had noticed in themselves was confidence had also ticked that box. Other answers were that they had met more people, were happier, less stressed, talked more and one person said they did more activities with their child. Some of their comments were:

'I'm more confident'

'Happier in myself'

'Yes, it helped meeting more people'

The changes didn't seem to be related to any length of time attending the sessions.

Impact noticed on families, and changes made at home

We next asked families to describe the impact attending Stay and Play was having on their families. Ten people offered a positive answer, with most others saying they had not noticed an impact or not answering the question. A couple of people said that the routine at home was easier and that activities were easier as children had more practice at them, and three people mentioned impact on their partners, either becoming more involved or getting a break. One person said, 'We are not as isolated.'

A related question asked people if they did things differently at home since attending Stay and Play. Twenty two people reported that they had made changes, which represents more than half of people who answered this question. Six people answered the questionnaire at their first session, and so could not be expected to have made any changes. Most people who answered this spoke of changes in the activities they do with their children at home: more messy play, more activities, and different activities. Some people also described changes in the way they do things at home including interacting more with their children and spending more time playing. One person said, 'I don't shout as much now' and another said that their home was safer as a result of attending Stay and Play. Some typical comments were:

'Draw and read a lot more'

'Tried some activities – painting, corn flour, snack time'

'I spend more time playing and drawing with him and putting things I've learned into practice.'

'Let him play with one thing at a time'

It seems from these answers that people are happy to have received new ideas for entertaining their children, and have used and appreciated advice.

Additional information or support gained by attending Stay and Play

The questionnaire next asked what information or support people had received as a result of their involvement with Stay and Play. These might be quick questions to staff; referrals to other Sure Start workers or to other services; or may come from other specialists visiting Stay and Play. The questionnaire offered a list of options to choose amongst and people selected them in the following way:

- 17 received help with personal development, particularly training;
- 14 people said they had received advice or support around healthy eating;
- 13 had received practical advice about safety and health at home;
- 12 recalled hearing of community involvement and volunteering opportunities;
- 10 had received help with children's behaviour;
- 10 had received help around child development;
- 8 received information or support around helping children to learn
- 4 people received information about feeding a baby or toddler;

- 4 received information to help with benefits and
 - 4 to help with managing money;
 - 4 received emotional support from professionals;
 - 2 received support with breastfeeding;
 - 1 sought support to stop smoking;
- and
- 4 ticked 'Other' one of which was information or referral to a speech therapist

No one chose the following: Information on what to eat and drink whilst pregnant, information / support about helping your child to learn, community involvement and volunteering opportunities

This shows some of the breadth of information and support sought by families, and highlights that it was gained in some way because families were attending Stay and Play. In answer to a later question, one person said that they did not feel the need for additional services because they knew that they could get any information from the staff should they need it.

In discussion with the Play Team, we learned that the Stay and Play session at Turner Hall regularly incorporated every Sure Start objective, by having representatives from Health, Family Support, Parental Involvement as well as the Toy Library and other services. The workers were therefore not surprised that so many needs were met and benefits gained, though they were interested in the emphasis on speech that parents and carers noticed.

When asked what was important in the comfort and welcome they received at Stay and Play, most people talked about friendliness generally, including the atmosphere, volunteers and other parents, and 26 people mentioned the friendliness of staff particularly. A couple of people talked about appreciating staff and other parents approaching them when they were new and didn't have people to talk to. One person said it 'makes you feel involved.' Some people also said that staff and volunteers were helpful. One person said they were happy to know that they could talk to staff if they had a problem. Another person compared the experience at Stay and Play to a different playgroup, not organised by Sure Start, in which 'staff (were) talking about people behind their back.'

If Stay and Play were to change . . .

We tried to ask a few questions that were specific to possible change, including whether people would travel to Stay and Play, what other groups or services they would use, and, generally, one message they would like to pass on to Sure Start regarding Stay and Play. The overall message here was that while there were some other things people would like, they did not want those in place of Stay and Play. For 13 people (of 38 who answered the question), the one message was not to change anything – leave things as they are. Others who listed additional services that would interest them were often careful to include the statement that they would not prefer a new service to Stay and Play, that it was an addition.

Some of the messages parents and carers wished to pass on were:

'Keep up the enthusiasm.'
'Keep it the way it is as children and adults like it'
'They have done a good job'

When asked whether they would be willing to travel to Stay and Play, the response was affirmative, but mixed. Some already travel or have their own transport. More than half said they would travel, and nearly three-quarters would travel if transport were available. People appeared enthusiastic but not entirely trusting of the minibus idea, with some people questioning whether the timing would work around picking up older children from nursery or school. There were a couple of maybes and seven people said they would not travel, though two of those said they would be willing to travel if there were no options close to home.

Changes and suggested improvements

For Stay and Play:

People were asked in a few different ways whether they could think of any changes, additions or improvement that could be made to the Stay and Play sessions. Very few people wanted to make any changes or suggestions. When asked what they might suggest changing, two thirds of those responding said 'nothing.'

However, a few did have some suggestions for change; these included outdoor activities and more activities for groups of children. The request for group activities for children came up in response to several different questions, and seemed in line with parents' and carers' understanding of a main purpose of Stay and Play, children learning to mix with other children.

There were also comments about being worried about the younger children and one person suggested more for under 1's to do. The Peer Researchers suggested this 'worry' was concern about younger children and more active toddlers. On the other hand, some also commented that they liked the range of ages together. Another general suggestion was having provision closer to home. This included arrangements for access to provision in Warsop on Saturdays. Safety at Turner Hall was noted by a couple of people, and we know that staff and volunteers have also noticed children's ability to disappear out the door.

For Other Services:

Amongst the messages that parents and carers felt it was important to pass on were requests for more Stay and Play sessions. One person suggested having one more messy play session in Woodhouse, and another asked for more activities nearer to Peafield Lane.

When asked what other groups or services families would like, parents and carers responded with a few suggestions. Crèches were mentioned by eight people, particularly for shopping and doing courses. A nearly equal number suggested training and college information, one person stressing information or courses about self esteem and assertiveness. Three people suggested

information or groups around food: healthy eating, food for toddlers and fussy feeders. One person mentioned jobs information and a drop-in place. One person pointed out that since they had not needed anything, they had not asked for anything and therefore did not know what groups were already available. As mentioned earlier, there were also suggestions for swimming for children, and keep-fit activities.

Evaluation of the evaluation

At the final session with the Peer Researchers (where 5 attended) we asked them to give us feedback of what they had thought of being involved in the evaluation. We also asked them, and those Peer Researchers who could not make the meeting, to complete an evaluation form anonymously. This section is informed by this information and feedback via Sure Start workers.

Both in the questionnaires and in person, the Peer Researchers universally said they had learned new things, and had liked that; that they liked being part of making things happen; that they enjoyed being part of consulting other parents and carers and knowing that their opinions would be valued.

However, the Peer Researchers had committed themselves to the project without really knowing how much time would be required and some said they found it difficult to keep coming to trainings and meetings and going to sessions to interview. It was difficult for people without their own transport to get to the meetings, and this was especially true when childcare was at a separate venue.

The Peer Researchers didn't always feel listened to, particularly regarding the length of the questionnaire. They said during its development they thought it was too long, and were still of this opinion after undertaking the evaluation. For some people, evening phone calls were an intrusion. And finally, there were several times when they weren't sure what was going on, e.g. where questionnaires were and who was attending which session, etc

Suggestions for future research

All of the questionnaires that the Peer Researchers filled out said they would be willing to be involved in further research in the future. There were suggestions, from them and from us, about what might make that easier: First, we were on a tighter deadline than would have been ideal. Second, everyone involved seemed to feel that we all (researchers and peer researchers) needed a single point of contact at Sure Start. With a single point of contact and a bit more time, meetings and trainings could be planned at venues near childcare; parents and carers could know how much time would be needed; evening phone calls would be less necessary (though some people are very busy and hard to catch during the day) and one person would know about and co-ordinate all aspects of the research or evaluation from Sure Start's point of view.

Conclusions and recommendations

An overview of what we've learned:

- People like Stay and Play for a range of reasons, see it as having multiple joined purposes and had multiple expectations for it. However a major reason was for their child to develop skills, including social skills.
- People have noticed differences in their children attending Stay and Play: confidence, sharing, speech especially
- They have noticed changes in themselves including more confidence, more social support and being happier
- Staff from the Play Team suggested that having all Sure Start objectives represented at one of the largest sessions may have contributed to the breadth of needs met and support offered at Stay and Play
- About one quarter of those responding talked about impact on their families due to attending Stay and Play
- Half of those responding had made changes at home. These were especially around incorporating different activities, and some were around changes in their parenting style and how they interact with their children.
- A key aspect to making Stay and Play comfortable and inviting for families was the welcome they received and the friendliness they felt from all who attended and especially staff.
- People received a great deal of information through their involvement in Stay and Play.
- When asked what to change, parents and carers essentially said don't change anything.

It seems clear that families are getting a lot out of the Stay and Play service, that they see it as integral to their weekly schedules and can name many benefits, especially for their children. In addition, people are taking home and using what they have learned at Stay and Play.

There are a few suggestions for further services, but very little indication that families are looking for something different from what is on offer with Stay and Play, excepting the request made by a few people for more group activities within the project, which seems to go with the opinion that Stay and Play is, amongst other things, a place for children to mix and learn social skills.

Recommendations

One of the key aspects that seemed to make Stay and Play pleasant for families was the welcome they received and the friendliness of the atmosphere, and especially of the staff. People also received a great deal of information through the staff at Stay and Play. Given that one of the things that prompted this evaluation was the potential stretch on staff time as Children's Centres are introduced in the area, this emphasis on staff and their importance may be a struggle for Sure Start Meden Valley. We asked the

Peer Researchers for their comments, experience and suggestions around this and they discussed it with us and with members of staff present.

Everyone seemed to understand that the plan for Stay and Play groups was for parents and carers to take over the sessions. It was stressed that volunteers would need to be especially welcoming to ALL parents, carers and children. Difficulties highlighted were:

- The changes that take place as children get older and parents and carers wish to move on to other things;
- Working with parents, carers and children who were perhaps difficult etc
- Cliques forming
- Safety

Arising from the discussion and our interpretation of the questionnaires, we suggest, that volunteers would need skills, knowledge and training in how to run a group. They would also need ongoing support and contact from staff. CRB checks and other ways to address safety would need to be agreed by all. With the Peer Researchers we also discussed what a big commitment it would be for parents and carers to take on the organising, set-up, greeting, overseeing, and clean up of sessions. The consensus seemed to be that as long as there were enough people to spread out the work, then the commitment would not be overwhelming, and that there were some people interested in taking this on. We all felt that rolling training would be required, and a continued emphasis on new people volunteering and taking some responsibility for the sessions. It was also unclear how toys and other items would be stored and available for sessions that parents and carers oversaw themselves.

It seemed clear that close ongoing support would be needed from the Sure Start staff team, as would an easy referral process. This was particularly true because so many people received information or support that was not directly about child development and play.

In addition, there are two other recommendations:

Thus far this evaluation has only heard from current users. Consultation with former users should happen as soon as possible to feed into decision-making.

For future research projects, it would be helpful to have a single point of contact with knowledge of the project and Sure Start.

Appendix A

Sure Start Meden Valley Stay and Play Questionnaire

Introduction

Sure Start is doing a survey about Stay and Play. We would like to know what people think of the service, what they like about it and what they would change.

If you have used any of the Stay and Play sessions, we would like to know what you think. Would you spend a few minutes answering the questionnaire?

Some details:

- The questionnaire will take up to 10 minutes to answer.
- Your name will not be on the questionnaire. We will ask for your postcode so that we are sure we talk to parents and carers from the whole area.
- The questionnaires will be seen by the evaluation team, who are:
 - The parent / carer evaluators
 - The team from De Montfort University
 - Some Sure Start staff
- Sure Start will look to take into account what you have to say.
- The results of the questionnaire will go into the newsletter.

THANK YOU!

Sure Start Meden Valley
Stay and Play Questionnaire for Parents and Carers

In order for us to know what areas the answers come from, please tell us your post code:

How old is/are your child/ren?

(Please circle the one/s taken to Stay and Play sessions)

How did you find out about Stay and Play?

When did you start bringing your child to Stay and Play?

About how often do you come to each session?

Day	Time	Venue	Weekly	Every 2 weeks	Monthly	Sometimes
Monday	9-11	Sherwood St.				
Monday	1-3	Sherwood St.				
Wednesday	1-3	Vale Road				
Wednesday	1-3	Church Warsop				
Thursday (messy play)	1-3	Turner Hall				
Friday (messy play)	9-11	Sherwood St.				
Friday	1-3	Sherwood St.				

5a. Are there particular sessions you don't attend, and for what reasons?

What do you think the purpose of Stay and Play is?

(Prompt: For children, for adults, for learning, for certain groups?)

What made you want to come along - what did you expect or hope for?

Did you have any anxieties or difficulties before hand?

8a What were they?

8b What helped you overcome them?

What is good about Stay and Play for you?

What would you change about it?

(Look for/Prompt: age-specific groups?

Crèche better for them?

What else would parents/carers like?

What do you like about the:

Venue?

Day/Time?

Activities?

Staff?

What would you change about the:

Venue?

Day/Time?

Activities?

Staff?

13. What do you think your child/children get out of coming to Stay and Play?

(Tick as many as you like)

- Somewhere different to spend some time
- Language development
- Experience of mixing with other children
- Experience of mixing with other adults
- Confidence
- Friends
- Other, please describe:
- Learning to share
- Better behaviour
- Different toys to play with
- New things to try
- A safe place to play
- A regular routine
- Healthy eating habits

14. What changes have you noticed in your child since attending Stay and Play?

As a parent/carer, what do you get out of coming to Stay and Play?

(Tick as many as you like)

- Confidence
- Friends
- Somewhere different to spend some time
- Adult company and social support
- Conversation with people in similar circumstances
- Information about child development
- Confidence as a parent or carer
- Reassurance that I am doing okay as a parent or carer
- Other - please describe:
- Reassurance that my child is normal
- A chance to get out of the house
- A change to practice my English
- Ideas about how to entertain my child/ren
- An opportunity to hear about other services
- An opportunity to spend time with my child/ren
- A break from being alone with my child/ren

16. Have you noticed changes in yourself since bringing your child to Stay and Play?

17. Has attending Stay and Play had any impact on your family?

18. Do you do anything differently at home because you've come to Stay and Play?

19. What additional information, advice or support have you received because you were involved with Stay and Play? These might be referrals, leaflets, etc.

	Information on what to eat and drink whilst pregnant		Help with quitting smoking when pregnant
	Help/advice with healthy eating		Help with quitting smoking as a parent
	Information about feeding your baby/toddler		Information/support about helping your child to learn
	Support with breastfeeding		Information/support about child development
	Information about other services to help with:		Support/help with personal development, for instance info about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o College /adult education o Training o Other
	Benefits,		
	Managing money, Anything else? (what?)		
	Emotional support from professionals		Community involvement and volunteering opportunities
	Help with children's behaviour		Practical advice about safety/health at home
Other (please describe):			

20. What were the most important things in making you feel comfortable and welcome at Stay and Play?

21. If you could suggest one message to the people who organise Stay and Play, what would it be?

(Prompt: What not to change?
What to change?)

22. Would you come to Stay and Play if you had to travel further?

(Prompt: If you could come by minibus?)

Sure Start is able to provide a range of services to children under four and their parents and carers. These include health, training, family support and volunteering and community involvement.

23. Besides Stay & Play, what other groups or services for children or parents/carers would you find useful?

(Prompt: Would you prefer these instead of Stay and Play?)

**Thank you for taking the time answer this questionnaire!
Your help is appreciated.**