

## SURE START RAVENSDALE

### NON-USER SURVEY

#### INTRODUCTION

During autumn 2001, a survey was carried out targeting Ravensdale families who were not using or had never used Sure start Services. 101 households were visited and 33 families interviewed.

The aim was to establish both their needs and their perceptions of Sure Start in order to enable SSR to plan the new timetable of activities for the New Year.

**All families had heard of Sure Start and 73% were interested in attending activities.** Of these the majority said they didn't come because they hadn't the confidence to come on their own and did not know any one they could come with.

#### METHODOLOGY

- A list of questions was written to find out the needs of local families and their perceptions of Sure Start. Colleagues were asked if they had any questions they wanted asking, and these were added to the list.
- A decision was made not to ask demographic questions because that information was not really necessary and because time was short.
- The Evaluation Officer made a list of addresses in each zone of the Sure Start area
- Households were visited between 10-3.30pm, by the Evaluation Officer on foot.
- Evaluation Officer wore a purple Sure Start sweatshirt for identification.
- Questions were asked according to the list, but the conversation was allowed to flow naturally. Where a parent was obviously in a rush or was not prepared to give much time the questions were prioritised and 1,2 and 4 were always asked. This meant that the amount of information collected at each household varied considerably.
- Notes were taken during the conversation if it was held inside the house or out of sight in a safe place on the street if it was a doorstep interview. Addresses were marked, in, not at home or no answer and all information written up on the same day after return to the office.
- Interviewer Effects. An underlying aim of the survey was to give a positive impression of Sure Start in order to encourage non-users to give it a try. A friendly informal approach was adopted by the interviewer and as a mother of young children with a local (ish) accent it was quite natural to show empathy/understanding of common parenting issues at relevant points in the conversation. Information was also given about the support systems and workers available through Sure Start as part of the conversation, where it was appropriate to a particular topic
- This approach minimised the danger of passing on unwanted information and appearing to be doing a 'cold sell'

## KEY FINDINGS

### On the doorstep

Everyone who answered the door was polite and courteous. Those who did not invite me inside were in zones 3,4 and 9, largely owner occupied areas. These particular residents did not feel the need for Sure Start services. 1 father said his wife was now at work and could no longer come.

### Wouldn't answer

Of the *occupied* 40 households visited, 17% did not answer the door. These were social housing in zones 5, 7 and 8.

### Questionnaire

**Have you heard of Sure Start YES 100%**

**Have you been to our Centre on Sanders Avenue? NO 91%**

**Do you know anyone that has? No 91%**

**Does it look friendly? (Shown photos of the Centre) YES, looks clean and new.**

**Do you know where it is? YES approx. 75%**

**Do you get the newsletter YES 97%**

**How could we change it? It's fine 61%**

Generally wanted more clarity on when groups ran and which ones they could come to.

**Do any of the sessions appeal to you? (Shown Autumn timetable)** All those parents who were interested in coming found something on the timetable that appealed.

**If yes what's stopping you ? See below**

**What would make it easier for you to come? See below**

**What would you like as a parent that would make your life easier/more fun? -**

Some friends get out more, a way of doing Xmas shopping without child

**What do you do all day with your children?** School run, shopping, visit friends and family, housework, playing with baby and feeding.

**What would you like to do for yourself?** Most people had family or partner to babysit whilst they went out shopping or to work, but several felt they would like more independent kind of childcare, but didn't know if that would be acceptable to their family and friends.

**Does your child go to any playgroups/ toddler groups?** Children over 3 were usually in school nursery. None of the under 3s attended any group play situation.

### WHAT WOULD PARENTS LIKE?

Very few people volunteered specific requests, but responded when shown the Autumn programme and photos of the Centre.

Babble bumps and babies, toddler group and play sessions all appealed to the appropriate age groups. People seemed uncertain what a drop in was but said they'd come.

Those with one young child (under 2s) weren't very sure whether they would be confident to use a crèche. (culturally unacceptable)

However many of the same mums also liked the idea of a group that was for them (i.e. Manicure, aromatherapy as well as parenting issues.)

3 parents asked for energetic activities for older children (3-5s) in the afternoon, particularly in winter when it's too cold to go to the park.

3 couples said they'd like to come together and Fridays were a good day.

### REASONS FOR NOT COMING

Not interested, / too busy. Some families had a routine with their children with which they were quite happy. Those families with several children at school have already developed a daily routine that doesn't allow much time for the youngest members (under 4s) to be taken anywhere child oriented.

Older children at school. " Its harder to get started with this one (baby) cos once I've done the school run I haven't the energy). In particular those families with an under 5 at nursery find it hard to fit everything in around this.

#### Days /times

Some working parents can't get to sure Start services for their child's age because of work commitments or school/nursery runs.

Some mothers on benefits said that Monday drop in and baby groups were inaccessible because its giro and then shopping day.

#### Other

Baby too young. These parents did not see the need for something for themselves  
Don't get round to it

Too busy - already have established routines.

**Those parents who said they would like to come to Sure Start gave the following reasons for not coming.**

#### Clarity of information

Families were unsure which activities were appropriate to their child .12% (4) had come to the River Maun but not visited the new Centre because " I cant work out which groups I could come to with my child "

#### Permission to come

Families did not know whether they were allowed to come, or needed permission, an appointment or an invitation. This view appeared to be grounded in a lack of confidence and fear of the unknown.

#### Confidence

The main reason given for not coming was confidence. These mothers (no fathers or couples gave this reason) said they couldn't come on their own and didn't know any one they could come with.

" I don't feel confident to just drop in. It's making the first move to come." When asked 'what would make it easier for you to come?' these mums all said "someone to come with".

### Universality-

At Sure Start Ravensdale there is concern amongst the staff that local people perceive Sure Start to be for losers and that 'drop ins are for dropouts'.

No one that I interviewed volunteered that view nor hinted in their conversation that they had heard that view. However one mother when asked do you know any other mums in the area, replied 'no, and I wouldn't want to' (however as most respondents did not know any other mothers in the area they are perhaps untouched by these negative perceptions)

### The voice of experience

\_Where respondent's children were over 4 I asked what would have been useful to them when their children were younger. The response was services that we provide. E.g. play session, toddler group. Mums in particular were pleased by the universality of the services provided by Sure Start.

" I suffered from PND and needed time on my own and help with the housework, but no one offered it. I asked for help from Social services but they couldn't help unless I slapped the kids around. What you're doing sounds great."

" I got a lot of help from women's aid. But I don't want lots of people to feel sorry for me. I don't like the pity. I want to move on and not be reminded of the past "

This mum felt our services looked good because there was no stigma attached and you don't have to be a "special case" to come.

The views and needs of interested non users quite closely reflected the views of Sure Start members. The differences being that members have had the **confidence**, the **support** and/or the **time** to come and join in.

### Demography

Ravensdale is an area of private and social housing with 98.7% white population. I did not ask any demographic questions during the survey as

A) my main aim was to find out non-users needs and views and give a good impression of sure start. If my approach was formal and interrogative, I felt there was danger that people would be put off.

B) Time was limited and the questions had to be prioritised in order to get the best information from the respondents in the time they would allow me.

However from my visits the following observations were made.

### Working habits

In those households where both parents worked there was a variety of childcare arrangements.

Both parents working and child at private day nursery (zone3)

Both parents working around each other's shifts. So mum did the childcare whilst dad worked and visa versa. In these cases it tended to be mum working a twilight shift after dad came home from a day job. (zone 2,9 and 8)

**It was those households where dad was out or away working and mum at home alone all day where I found the highest perception of isolation amongst the mothers.** The lone mothers I spoke to seemed better able to go out and find company and services than those new to being at home with a young child.

### Gender differences

Where couples were interviewed together there was a tendency for the mother to be more restrained in their comments. Fathers were quite direct and willing to share information. Mothers seemed to want to present an ability to cope (in the fathers presence) where fathers were quite happy to discuss issues and problems.

**Fathers interviewed alone all said they were quite happy at home caring for their child and wouldn't want to bring them to a group or drop in.**

### Play session attendance

Of the 33 families interviewed 4 were in part time school nursery and 2 in full time school. **Of the other families none of the children attended any organised play session.**

### Common concerns about children

Parents expressed concerns about their children's feeding, sleeping and general behaviour management. These are all issues, which are covered by Sure Start in various groups and one to one advice. The parent's comments suggested that the **parents had too little information on feeding issues** (i.e. what food to give when weaning) **and unrealistic expectations of children's behaviour.** EG when a 6 mth old baby hit another baby who was encroaching on her space the mother decided her baby was a bully.

### Distance.

All the parents asked felt that they would be able to get to the Sure Start Centre, although some said it would be awkward to fit in with coming and going to school.

## APPENDIX

The under 4 population of Ravensdale is distributed most densely in zones 7 and 8 of the area. I have surveyed homes in zones 3,4,5,7,8,9.

The survey was carried out during October and November 2001. A list of households that had not accessed any services during the last 2 months was compiled. Andrea then visited a sample of these homes during daytime hours, without prior arrangement.

This meant that some residents were out working or shopping or going about their daily business. However as our activities/sessions are currently all during the day, those parents who are working are excluded and we must assume that they have childcare for those children.

I have knocked on the doors of 101 households

No one was home at 50 homes. No one answered the door 7

Out of 33 respondents 9 weren't interested. Felt they had their own support networks, family and friends.

### Visit Statistics

AREA	Number of doors knocked on	no one home	Number spoken to	% people in	Comments
Zone 3 (Heatherly)	9	5	4	44%	Private expensive housing
Zone 4 (Linden Rd)	2	1	1	50%	Private expensive housing
Zone 5 (Sherwood Hall)	11	9, NA1	1	9%	All out at work
Zone 7 Alcock Ave)	46	22 NA3	12	26%	9 boarded
Zone 8 (Newgate Lane)	17	3 NA3	9	53%	1 moved out, 1 no kids
Zone 9 (Recreation St.)	16	10	6	37%	Those not in appeared to be at work
TOTAL	101	50. NA7	33		

NA = No answer. The house was occupied but no one answered the door.

