

**SureStart4u  
Local Evaluation-  
Documentary  
Review**

# SureStart4u Local Evaluation- Documentary Review

Final report



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## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Pam Goodwin and Vince Owen for their continued support throughout the course of this project, as well as all the staff at SureStart4u who played their part in the evaluation.

Thank you as well to all those parents and carers who gave up their time to contribute to share their views with us through the survey.

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Report: PR04145  
(February 2005)

First Published (February 2005)  
Printed in Great Britain by M.E.L Research Limited 8 Holt Court  
Aston Science Park Birmingham B7 4AX

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## Context

SureStart4u is a sixth Wave Sure Start Local Programme covering the areas of Bentilee, Moss Green, Berryhill and Eaton Park in Stoke-on-Trent. It is located in a geographical area which has undergone substantial neighbourhood developments worth 20.5 million, through the SRB2 and SRB Villages Initiative. As a result, SureStart4u follows on a tradition of community involvement and development, and partnership working, the structures for which are likely to be already well-developed. The area is itself a fairly homogenous one; however, the patch is fragmented geographically and makes up a number of distinct communities.

## Executive Summary

**E1** M-E-L Research was commissioned by SureStart4u in October 2004 to undertake a short term evaluation of the SureStart4u local programme. This evaluation incorporated a documentary review of Management Information Systems in place at the programme as well as a user satisfaction consultation (as required by the Sure Start Unit). This report focuses on just one aspect of the SureStart4u local evaluation- the review of documentary evidence.

**E2** The main sources of documentary evidence reviewed by M-E-L included Board meeting minutes, Performance Management Grids, statistical results and qualitative reports for services between January and September 2004, and E-START data on referrals and reach.

**E3** A content analysis of the data was carried out, in order to answer key research questions:

- i. Are the Management Information Systems robust?
- ii. How well are the Management Information Systems being implemented?
- iii. Will data generated demonstrate achievement of aims and objectives?
- iv. How well is SureStart4u performing?
- v. Is there evidence of parental involvement?

**E4** The review clearly indicated that SureStart4u has a robust and reliable monitoring system. This uses both statistical and qualitative data collected on a quarterly basis for each service. Data is recorded in a consistent format, and held electronically and in hard copy. This system allows for services to be monitored closely and for under-performing services to be identified at an early stage. This has been a success as we can see that some projects have already been decommissioned. This monitoring structure is robust, and allows for continual evaluation.

**E5** The monitoring system is not static and allows SureStart4u to be flexible in its approach to measuring the success of services. The evidence shows that amendments have been made to project targets and plans, indicating that SureStart4u can adapt to meet changing needs. Despite this flexibility, there are tight controls over the system ensuring that it remains robust.

**E6** Whilst SureStart4u has an excellent monitoring system, the evaluation revealed that there are areas for improvements in the manner in which the system is used. In short the systems are only ever as effective as the way in which they are used by those providing data. Indeed just 3 of the 21 projects monitored have all the statistical and qualitative results which we would expect. SureStart4u's monitoring system is greatly reliant on staff, parents, providers and outside agencies recording information. This has contributed to a number of unpopulated targets which limits Sure Start's ability to identify problems with a service at an early stage.

**E7** The reliance on staff, parents and professionals for data brings into question the quality of data recorded. Providers of projects lacking numerous results may require additional support to ensure that they are confident to provide Sure Start with accurate and relevant data (both quantitative and qualitative). All staff need to be trained to a sufficient level to ensure that they understand the importance of the monitoring process and are able to record meaningful data.

**E8** The targets set for each SureStart4u project were found to be consistent with the project aims. The majority of targets are measurable and generate meaningful data. Despite this, some targets set by SureStart4u do not appear to be of help in measuring progress of individual projects. Some targets are difficult to measure and highly subjective, whilst others appear unrealistic. Certain targets would also expect to see change over several years. Whilst important, these are not suitable for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of a project in the short term. SureStart4u needs to ensure that all targets are 'SMART' indicators. This is particularly important for those projects which have a number of unmeasured targets.

**E9** Comparisons of SureStart4u's monitoring systems with other Sure Start Programmes are difficult to make as this information is not provided by NESS. We can only compare the systems with experiences of other documentary evaluations of Sure Start programmes completed by M-E-L. On this basis, we can state that SureStart4u has the most advanced system for monitoring and data management, and that systems overall are working well.

**E10** Documentary evidence was used to assess management structures in place at SureStart4u. This provides a very positive reflection on management arrangements. The Partnership Board demonstrates strong leadership, chaired by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning who will be instrumental in future mainstreaming of services. The structures and terms of reference of the Board have been well conceived, and so the Board is able to retain a strategic focus. In terms of membership, all key statutory agencies are represented.

**E11** Partnership Board members demonstrate real commitment to cross agency working, with high levels of membership and attendance from statutory agencies. This commitment to partnership working is likely to have been benefited greatly by the long history of working across organisational boundaries in the local area. The high levels of involvement of parents and carers in the Board are a real achievement, with these representatives very active in this setting. This is very encouraging for the future development of the Programme.

**E12** At this stage, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of services using documentary evidence. At such an early point in the programme, projects are still establishing themselves, which may account for the often mixed results seen. Despite this, there have been a number of successes so far. The Community Development project has been vital in ensuring that parents have a real stake in decision-making through representation on the Board. Other projects, such as Play and Rhyme have clearly had a positive impact on local families. The most that can be inferred from the evidence at present is that those services which are performing well and meeting targets are having a positive impact on the families that they serve. It is, however, very early in the life of the programme to be able to draw meaningful conclusions about the success of individual services. The real results will be revealed over the next 12 months.

**E13** A key factor in the success of any programme is its ability to engage community members at all levels. At SureStart4u, parents have been engaged at a high level in the programme. However, this involvement is limited to a highly committed core of parents and carers. Other projects are struggling to get parents involved in service provision. Initially, targets should be reduced to a more attainable level, and raised as parents gain the confidence and support to become involved. However, parents may simply not wish to be involved in such an intensive way. In order to make this a more attractive option, SureStart4u needs to devise a package of support and training. Parents and carers may also be more interested in becoming involved if they were formally rewarded for their commitments, receiving payment for their time.

**E14** Despite some problems in involvement in service delivery, it is clear that SureStart4u is able to involve high numbers of parents as service users. Once parents have used a SureStart4u service, they are likely to become regular, repeat users. This is an excellent reflection on the quality of provision and an encouraging statistic for SureStart4u.

**E15** SureStart4u has developed good links with outside agencies during its time in operation, with Sure Start projects receiving numerous referrals from Health Visitors and Midwives. The Baseline revealed that these professional have also been influential in raising awareness of SureStart4u as a whole. Despite this, the majority of referrals to SureStart4u services still originate from inside the programme indicating high levels of interdependence between projects.

## 1. Purpose, method and format

### 1.1 Purpose and Objectives

M-E-L Research, an independent research and service delivery consultancy based in Birmingham, was commissioned by SureStart4u (a sixth wave Sure Start local programme) in October 2004 to undertake a short term evaluation of the SureStart4u local programme. This SureStart4u local evaluation at the programme as well as a user satisfaction consultation (as required by the Sure Start Unit).

The objectives of the consultation were to:

- Measure uptake of and satisfaction with local services (including SureStart4u services), and the extent to which these meet the needs of local parents.
- Understand what SureStart4u is doing, and how well this is being done
- Compile an evidence base to inform funding and mainstreaming.
- Identify key questions and hypotheses for future evaluation

This report focuses on just one aspect of the SureStart4u local evaluation- the review of documentary evidence. The methodology adopted in the evaluation is outlined below in Section 1.2, with a discussion of the key findings in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents a summary of key conclusions and recommendations for future service delivery. The user satisfaction consultation is analysed separately in a stand alone report.

### 1.2 Methodology

#### 1.2.1 Documentary review

The evaluation comprised a documentary review of existing data held by SureStart4u.

In order to evaluate how the programme is performing using secondary data, M-E-L first needed to prioritise which documentation to examine. A list of the documents examined is appended, with the main sources of information as follows:

- Board meeting minutes
- Staff meeting minutes
- Performance management grids for all Sure Start services
- Statistical results for all Sure Start services between January-April 2004 and July-September 2004.
- Quarterly qualitative reports for all Sure Start services
- E-START data on referrals and service users

A content analysis of this information was carried out, in order to answer some key research questions:

1. Are the Management Information Systems robust?
2. How well are the Management Information Systems being implemented?
3. Will data generated demonstrate achievement of aims and objectives?
4. How well is SureStart4u performing?
5. Is there evidence of parental involvement?

The results are presented in both text and tabular format. They are compared where possible with national data, using the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) website.

### 1.3 Format of the report

Chapter 2 presents the findings from the review of documentary evidence. The report concludes with a summary of key findings and recommendations for future delivery of the programme

## 2. Documentary review

### 2.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the results of the review of secondary data held by SureStart4u. It is split into two main sections. The first examines the actual structure of the recording systems, with the second focusing on the projects and services provided by SureStart4u. The findings are presented both in text and in a tabular format.

### 2.2 Management Information Systems

The first aspect of the review involved an examination of documentary evidence provided to M-E-L by SureStart4u to analyse the quality of the programme's data recording systems and to assess how well the programme is able to measure its progress.

#### 2.2.1 Monitoring Systems

The documentary review clearly indicated that SureStart4u does have a robust and reliable monitoring system.

At the planning stages of each project a structured Performance Management Grid is drawn up identifying a need for the service, as well as potential enablers and barriers to the success of a project. This plan also identifies a number of 'results' or outputs which a service would be expected to generate through its lifetime.

Data is collected on a quarterly basis. It takes the form of numerical data- measuring whether specified results have been reached. This is complemented by qualitative data- a report from the member of staff responsible for the service feeding back on the quarter's work. Data is recorded in a consistent format, and held electronically and in hard copy.

This system allows for projects and services to be monitored closely and for under-performing services to be identified at an early stage. This has clearly been a success as we can see that some projects have already been decommissioned over the first year.

This monitoring structure is robust, and allows for continual evaluation of services. Illustrating this, documentary evidence reveals that changes have been made to results for specific projects. For example, a revised Performance Management Grid and set of results were drawn up for Antenatal Education, and additional results were added to 'First Steps'. This in itself suggests that SureStart4u's monitoring system has been effective. It has allowed Sure Start to identify services which appear to be underperforming and evaluate reasons for this. Targets can then be modified to measure progress more effectively.

This system is not a static one and thus allows SureStart4u to be flexible in its approach to measuring the success of services. Despite this flexibility, there are tight controls over the system ensuring that it remains robust. Any providers wishing to alter their results need to submit a revised planning grid with explanation to the Board who approve any changes.

Whilst the information above does demonstrate that SureStart4u has an excellent monitoring system, an evaluation of the secondary data sources available does reveal that there are some areas for improvements in the manner in which this system is used.

#### 2.2.2 Monitoring data

Table 2 presents, in grid form, a list of projects provided by SureStart4u, as well as project plans and quantitative and qualitative monitoring data for each project. While structures are

in place for each service to be planned and monitored consistently, Table 2 indicates that this is not always the case. Of the 21 projects identified in the documentary evidence the majority **do** have planning grids and some results, however, just three projects have all the statistical and qualitative results which we would expect to see. Of course, not all of these projects will have been operating over the full course of the year, which may impact on this to an extent. There are also more apparent gaps in the data:

- One project (Domestic Violence) does not have a Performance Management Grid. It is therefore not documented what needs this project is meeting, and how these needs were identified.
- Six projects (including Crèche and Childminding Network) have no results at all. It is unclear whether these projects were never officially commissioned, whether they have yet to start, or whether there has been no monitoring for these services.
- It is not clear which projects have been decommissioned. Whilst some projects are not being monitored (including Ballet and Tap, Crèche, Childminding Network and Transport), it is not obvious whether these have been decommissioned. This needs to be fully documented, along with the reasons for decommissioning.
- Qualitative feedback which should be provided on a quarterly basis appears to be sporadic for certain projects, for example, Bentilee Young Parents and the 'Fix It' service. Sure Start needs to ensure that this information is submitted for all services each quarter so that any problems can be identified. This raises some questions over recording processes employed by service providers- the systems in place are very effective, but only if they are used correctly.
- The documents displaying statistical results omit some targets which have not been measured during the quarter. These targets are displayed in Table 4. The emphasis is then only on those targets which have been measured, and monitoring of the success of a service appears to be based on these. It is important not to forget those targets which have not been measured, as these should give a useful indicator of success in service delivery.

### 2.2.3 Information providers

As highlighted in Section 2.2.1, our review of the documentary evidence found robust monitoring systems, however, systems which can be ineffective if they are not used correctly. In short, the systems are only as good as those providers collecting data.

Table 2 reveals that, particularly for the qualitative feedback, data is not always provided by members of staff. The 'Fix It' and Bentilee Young Parents project are lacking data for a number of quarters. In these instances the system can fall down due to recording of data.

Comments in the qualitative feedback reports themselves indicate that one weakness of the system lies in its reliance on others recording data. For the two 'Play and Rhyme' projects, some data is unavailable as parents do not use diaries provided to them by SureStart4u. Sure Start need to examine alternative ways of recording progress which can be 'owned' by Sure Start staff, rather than relying on families themselves to provide this data.

**Table 2: SureStart4u Projects- planning and monitoring of progress**

Project	Performance Management Grid	Statistical Results			Reached Target				Qualitative Feedback			Comments
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
<b>Play and Rhyme Home Visits</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 3	☺ = 3	☺ = 3		✓		✓	Revised targets for Aug 04. Q2 low due to summer holidays, Q3 low due to Xmas holidays. Families don't want visits at these times. Diaries unpopular with parents, so time not been recorded effectively.
<b>Play and Rhyme - Toy Library and Bookshare</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 3	☺ = 3	☺ = 2 ☹ = 1		✓	✓	✓	Library closed, targets could not be reached. Also inflexible opening times. Diaries not used amongst parents so hard to measure some targets. Mobile library opened Sept 04. Popular sessions. Services drop off in holiday period so hard to reach targets.
<b>Mum2Mum</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 1 ☹ = 1 ☹ = 2	☺ = 1 ☹ = 3	☺ = 2 ☹ = 2		✓	✓	✓	Volunteer Breastfeeding Mother Supporters (VBMS) - drop in parents wishing to be involved, many drop-outs. Unclear what the role of these will be anyway. Good links with HV and midwives. Results from CHIPS/HISS are not always accurate.
<b>Crèche</b>	✓											
<b>Family Link/Family Support</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 1 ☹ = 2 ☹ = 1	☺ = 4	☺ = 2 ☹ = 2			✓	✓	Link workers initially couldn't do meaningful work as used to taxi people around. Transport policy now developed and problem resolved. Initially high no. referrals from range of local agencies but number decreased. Good relationships with other agencies. No referrals schools, GPs.
<b>Antenatal Education</b>	✓ (updated)	✓	✓			☹ = 2	☺ = 2			✓	✓	Recorded by Midwives. Grid updated due to hard to measure results. Groups/home visits provided. Group held at Eaton Park- unpopular venue. Moved to Bentilee Health Centre

Project	Performance Management Grid	Statistical Results			Reached Target			Qualitative Feedback				Comments
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
<b>Childminding Network</b>	✓											New worker – employed through EYDCP – she will set up childminding network.
<b>Childcare Providers</b>	✓											
<b>Preschool and Stay and Play</b>	✓											Q2. Stay and Play closed over the summer.
<b>Bentilee Young Parents</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 2 ☹ = 2 ☹ = 1	☺ = 5					✓	Feeling that the group has not been as successful as possible in making services more YP friendly. Good attendance but confidence building slow process- YP still require transport to groups. Few fathers.
<b>Speech and Language</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☹ = 1 ☹ = 4	☺ = 3 ☹ = 1 ☹ = 1	☺ = 4 ☹ = 1		✓	✓	✓	Many DNAs from families to appointments. Impact on waiting list which = 3 months max Q1. Attendance at groups= variable esp. during holidays. No SLA.
<b>Transport</b>	✓											
<b>Community Development</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 3 ☹ = 1 ☹ = 2	☺ = 4 ☹ = 2	☺ = 6		✓	✓	✓	Have steady attendance figures at (informal) parents' forum and Board level. STEPS training for parents and crèche. Target re: events not always achieved as these on ad hoc basis. Parents involved at high level in SS- i.e. looking at capital builds and children's centre. But it is a core of dedicated parents, need wider engagement.
<b>Classical Ballet and Tap Class</b>	✓											

Project	Performance Management Grid	Statistical Results			Reached Target			Qualitative Feedback				Comments
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
<b>Benefits and Money Advice</b>	✓	✓	✓			☺ = 1 ☹ = 2	☺ = 3			✓	✓	Successful benefits campaign encouraged much use from local families. Referrals from SS and self referrals. Does not want to be seen as just crisis management.
<b>Smoking Cessation</b>	✓	✓	✓			☺ = 1 ☹ = 1	☺ = 1 ☹ = 1				✓	Referrals increased. Some difficulties liaising with local GP?
<b>First Steps Psychology</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 4 ☹ = 3	☺ = 5 ☹ = 1 ☹ = 3	☺ = 7 ☹ = 2		✓	✓	✓	Referrals have come in steadily – but none for dads. Able to offer quick appointments but many dna. Home visits more popular. Parents consulted re: design services. Triple P- variable uptake. STEPS (confidence building) good uptake. Increase in number of referrals
<b>Domestic Violence</b>		✓	✓	✓	☹ = 4 ☹ = 1	☺ = 1 ☹ = 1				✓		Poor referral rate – should increase with the 2 new recruited family link workers. Difficult subject matter meant that it was hard to raise awareness. Project discontinued
<b>First Contact</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 1	☺ = 2 ☹ = 1	☺ = 2			✓	✓	Not all 4 results received regularly. Commitment to making contact with new births- HV contact, then SS worker, then followed up if decline. Targets can't always be met if numbers aren't born- use a % rather than number.
<b>Health Information and Safety</b>	✓ (updated)	✓	✓	✓	☺ = 1 ☹ = 1 ☹ = 2	☺ = 3 ☹ = 1	☺ = 1 ☹ = 3	✓	✓		✓	Logic/results grids were revised as targets not being met (10/04). Too much focus on HV before and some duplication services. Parents not wanting to engage in providing information themselves. HELPS popular.

Project	Performance Management Grid	Statistical Results			Reached Target			Qualitative Feedback				Comments
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Handyman/ Fix it and Training service	✓			✓			☹ = 2	✓				Awareness needs to be raised. Target re: supervision not reached as parents use HELPS scheme when Handyman not on duty. No. of parents also feel confidence to fit equip themselves. No. of general 'fix it' tasks around the office and SS groups. Lack of results returned by Handyman.

**Key**

- ☺ - Targets exceeded
- ☹ - Targets matched
- ☹ - Targets not reached

**Table 3 SureStart4u- Unmet Results from January 2004 (Quarter 4 2003/4) to September 2004 (Quarter 2 2004/5)**

Project	Result	When was the target unmet?	Explanation provided
<b>First Contact</b>	Families with new babies visited within 1st two months of babies birth	Failed Q1, Q2	Q1- Not enough births. Q2- Contact made with parents but high refusal rate
<b>Community Development</b>	Half of Board made up by parents	Failed Q4	Target only short by one parent
	Good attendance at fun events	Failed Q4	No major events held
<b>Family support</b>	Families perceive themselves to be less isolated	Failed Q2	Stay & Play groups closed during summer
	Parents including fathers actively participating in SS4U activities	Failed Q2	Stay & Play groups closed during summer
<b>First steps</b>	Parents will report raised esteem, new skills and confidence thro involvement in the Sentinel parenting articles & through reading psycho education material & are putting these into practice	Failed Q4, Q1, Q2	
	As a result of co-working, training and consultation staff will have heightened skills and confidence and be able to support children with mild behavioural and emotional difficulties	Failed Q4	Training planned at this point
	Parents, volunteers and staff will have been trained at Primary Care and Group level Triple P & be part of the Triple P network of support & services in SureStart4U	Failed Q1, Q2	Training planned
	Children will have the opportunity to take part in a whole class programme to increase confidence (e.g. Tommy Walks Tall, Confident Kids	Failed Q1	Q1: There were fewer children in the class than anticipated
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	Parents trained as volunteers to offer support to victims of domestic violence	Failed Q4	No take up
	Women will feel safer, supported and less isolated and better informed about domestic & sexual violence	Failed Q1	

Project	Result	When was the target unmet?	Explanation provided
<b>Health Information and Safety</b>	Parents will have participated in education provision in relation to family health and feel confident in treating minor ailments and accessing healthcare services. Have at least 1 experience of putting the learning into action and getting a positive outcome	Failed Q4, Q1, Q2	Q4- Course held but not evaluated Q1- Informal ad hoc training only. This not evaluated. Q2- Target under revision
	Health visitors will report that they have an additional resource available to them in relation to their work with families and will have referred families for advice and support in relation to health e.g. weaning demonstration	Failed Q4, Q2	Q4- Worker not in post for whole of quarter
	Health visitors will report that they have an additional resource available to them in relation to their work with individual families and will have referred families for advice and support in relation to health e.g. weaning demonstration	Failed Q2	
<b>Speech and Language</b>	Children at risk of speech/language delay will have speech & language within normal limits on school entry	Failed Q4	Q4- Low figures due to staff induction & set up of project
	Play & Rhyme will have clear S/L plan to follow for identified children	Failed Q4	
	Parents confidence will increase in their ability to stimulate their child's language as a result of this project	Failed Q4, Q1, Q2	Q4- Evaluation materials did not measure this Q2- High number DNAs
	Non specialist staff will be confident with basic skills in language development	Failed Q4	
<b>Mum 2 Mum</b>	Women b/f at 6 weeks	Failed Q4, Q1	Concern that not correctly recorded
	Women b/f at birth	Failed Q1	
	Women b/f at 4 months	Failed Q1	Q1 Concern that HV are not correctly recording data
	VBMS trained & actively working	Failed Q4	
<b>Bentilee YP Group</b>	Young parents understand the impact they can have on their children	Failed Q4	
<b>Fix It project</b>	Parents/Carers confident to tackle minor repairs/maintenance	Failed Q2	

Project	Result	When was the target unmet?	Explanation provided
<b>Fix It project</b>	Parents/carers have fitted safety equipment with onsite supervision & are confident to undertake similar projects	Failed Q2	
<b>Play and rhyme/Toy library/Bookshare</b>	Parents will bring their children to their local library at least once a month to choose & borrow books over 3 months	Failed Q2	Library closed
<b>Smoking Cessation</b>	Partners & other adults in the household who set a quit date and remain stopped from that date	Q2	

**Table 4: Statistical results which have not been measured**

Project Name	Quarter 4 targets (2003/4)	Quarter 1 targets (2004/5)	Quarter 2 targets (2004/5)	Comments
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	No results received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men will change their attitude and behaviour towards women</li> <li>Counselling will help couples achieve more positive lifestyles</li> <li>Parents trained as volunteers to offer support to victims of domestic violence</li> </ul>	No results received	<p>Five targets in total, but only a small number of these are measured.</p> <p>Some targets are very vague, subjective, and therefore difficult to measure meaningfully</p>
<b>First Contact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer of SureStart4u information &amp; registration</li> <li>Knowledge of SureStart4u</li> <li>Families with new babies visited within 1st two months of babies birth</li> </ul>	Knowledge of SureStart4u	Knowledge of SureStart4u	Four targets in total. One of these targets is measured annually so does not figure on monthly results tables.
<b>Handyman/ Fix it</b>	No results received	No results received	Parents/carers have fitted safety equipment with onsite supervision & are confident to undertake similar projects	No results received for Q4 and Q1. This project appears to need support in collecting targets/MIS. Some of the results are rather vague, hard to track and quite subjective.
<b>Antenatal Education</b>	No results received at all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new mum feels confident &amp; able to cope in the first 6 weeks after the birth 70%</li> <li>Families have realistic expectations of childbirth and the early postnatal period and know what help is available after the birth 85%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new mum feels confident &amp; able to cope in the first 6 weeks after the birth 70%</li> <li>Families have realistic expectations of childbirth and the early postnatal period and know what help is available after the birth 85%</li> </ul>	Four targets in total. No results received in Q4 due to change in project leader. Other targets for Q1 to be accessed in July. Q2 results very subjective so logic grid being updated.

Project Name	Q4 targets	Q1 targets	Q2 targets	Comments
<b>Smoking Cessation</b>	No results received	Validate non smoking status in both groups after 1 year follow up % of women who are smoking at delivery ( 3% reduction)	Validate non smoking status in both groups after 1 year follow up % of women who are smoking at delivery ( 3% reduction)	Four targets in total. No results for Q2 due to change in project leader. Other targets for Q1 to be accessed in July. Results for Q2 were not available at the time. Suggests need for formal information sharing systems with PCT/providers of health information.
<b>Childminding Network</b>	No results received	No results received	No results received	Unclear whether project has yet to start, has been decommissioned, or is not being evaluated
<b>Money Advice</b>	No results received	CAB parent volunteer apprentices gain full time employment	CAB parent volunteer apprentices gain full time employment	Four targets in total. No results for Q4 due to project not being set up at that stage. Remaining target not measured may not be realistic at this early stage.
<b>Bentilee Young Parents</b>			No results received	New project leader so no results submitted.

This issue of reliance on others also applies to professionals. The feedback from the Mum2Mum project states that data on breastfeeding is not correctly recorded. It identifies problems with the data provided by CHIPS and HISS systems, and states that Health Visitors do not seem to be accurately recording data. This appears to be an issue across other Sure Start Local Programmes according to NESS resources ([www.ness.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk)). For other projects, notably, Antenatal Education and Smoking Cessation, certain statistical results are consistently late. This could pose problems in identifying under-performing services at an early stage. SureStart4u needs to examine who is providing this data. If the data provider is outside Sure Start it may be of help to establish formal Information Sharing Protocols with the agency, stating when and how often SureStart4u require information.

Finally the reliance on staff, parents and professionals does raise the question of how well data is being recorded. Providers of those projects lacking a high number of results may require some additional support to ensure that they are confident to provide Sure Start with regular, accurate and relevant data (both quantitative and qualitative). All staff need to be trained to a sufficient level to ensure that they understand the importance of the monitoring process and are able to record meaningful data. They should be clear exactly what is required from them, and what the data that they provide will be used for. This should be of particular help in monitoring services where results are not submitted for each quarter (for example the 'Fix It' service), or those where particular results are often not measured.

#### 2.2.4 Statistical results

Each service provided by SureStart4u has a number of statistical results which it is expected to attain, measurable each quarter. An important part of assessing the monitoring system in place at Sure Start is examining these targets, and whether they are appropriate. Inappropriate targets may not be attainable or measurable, and therefore may give a misleading picture of the progress of a project. All targets set to measure the success of a project need to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

In our review of the documentary evidence it appears that the results set for each project were consistent with the aims of the project. The majority of targets are measurable and can generate meaningful data. Despite this, some specific statistical targets set by SureStart4u do not appear to be of help in measuring progress of individual projects. Some targets are difficult to measure and highly subjective, whilst others appear unrealistic.

In support of this, all targets which were not reached on at least one occasion are displayed in Table 3, with those targets which are not always measured recorded in Table 4. Examining these specific targets, we can make the following comments:

- Results set by SureStart4u are not always reflective of real life conditions. Some results do not take into account the impact that school holidays will have on uptake of services. SureStart4u could consider reducing targets over key holiday periods. This would be particularly applicable to certain Family Support targets which were unmet during the summer period due to the fact that Stay and Play Groups were closed. This is also an issue for other projects- for First Contact it is unrealistic to expect a set number of births each quarter. In this instance, SureStart4u should set itself the target of reaching a proportion of parents rather than a set number.
- It could be the case that some results set are simply not attainable at present. Despite heavy involvement of a core of families in SureStart4u, it is unrealistic to expect a proportion of the community to be keen to get involved in every initiative. This led to unmet targets for Mum2Mum as well as the Domestic Violence project.
- Some results set are not measurable in any meaningful way. Tables 3 and 4 display some subjective targets. For example, in the former Domestic Violence

project it is not possible to measure meaningfully the target '*Men will change their attitudes and behaviour towards women*'. In addition, this target could be defined as a 'lag' indicator. Such indicators are those which are unlikely to be changed over a short period, but rather will take years to influence. Changing traditional attitudes and behaviours will take a long time to take effect. Whilst it is important to consider these long term changes when evaluating projects, for monitoring purposes it is more useful to measure 'lead' indicators. These indicators will see changes over a short period, and are likely to precede the long term lag indicators.

- As mentioned previously, Table 2 indicates that not all of the statistical results are consistently monitored. These unpopulated targets are not displayed on the quarterly results sheets, so it is vital to ensure that these are not forgotten. SureStart4u needs to examine why these results are not being measured, and either identify potential data sources for these or establish more easily measurable targets. A member of staff needs to be responsible for ensuring that data for these results is available, if not on a quarterly, then even an annual basis.

#### 2.2.5 Conclusion

SureStart4u is monitoring its progress in an effective manner. It has excellent systems and structures for monitoring, allowing it to identify effective and under-performing services and take necessary action. The only criticism which could be made of the current system is that it is not always correctly used by those staff and outside agencies providing data. SureStart4u need to ensure that everyone is aware of the importance of providing data, and given the support to be able to do this. Information Sharing Protocols may be of use for SureStart4u where they are reliant on outside agencies providing them with data. Lastly, whilst the results (or targets) generally reflect the aims and objectives of the projects, some results may need to be modified to ensure that they are both meaningful and measurable.

Comparisons of SureStart4u's Management Information Systems with other Sure Start Programmes are difficult to make as this information is not provided by NESS. We can only compare the systems in place with experiences of two other documentary evaluations of Sure Start programmes which M-E-L has completed. On this basis, we can state that SureStart4u has the most advanced system for monitoring and data management, and that systems overall are working well.

**Table 5: Partnership Board attendance**

Date	Number of attendees	Attendees
14 <sup>th</sup> August 2003	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• Temporary Administrator</li> <li>• Triple P Project Worker</li> <li>• Clinical Psychologist</li> <li>• Community Development Worker</li> <li>• Parent Link Worker</li> <li>• EYDCP</li> <li>• Childminding Network Development Officer</li> <li>• Work Start Development Officer</li> <li>• Support Worker, Play and Rhyme</li> <li>• Senior Support Worker, Play and Rhyme</li> <li>• Support Worker, Play and Rhyme</li> <li>• Support Worker, Play and Rhyme</li> <li>• Childcare Manager</li> </ul>
15 <sup>th</sup> September 2003	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• MWB Consultancy</li> <li>• 4 parents</li> <li>• 1 Grandparent</li> <li>• North Stoke PCT</li> <li>• Social Services</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Sure Start Wave 5 Director</li> </ul>
14 <sup>th</sup> October 2003	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological Services</li> <li>• Programme Administrator</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Sure Start Wave 5 Director</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> <li>• North Stoke PCT</li> <li>• MWB Consultancy</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• 3 parents</li> <li>• 1 grandparent</li> </ul>
14 <sup>th</sup> November 2003	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 2 North Stoke PCT</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> <li>• Sure Start Wave 5 Director</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Property Services</li> <li>• Community Development Worker</li> <li>• Crèche Manager</li> <li>• District Centre</li> <li>• 4 parents</li> <li>• 1 Grandparent</li> </ul>

15 <sup>th</sup> December 2003	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 7 parents</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> <li>• Sure Start Wave 5 Director</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• Social Services</li> <li>• Clinical Psychologist</li> <li>• EYDCP</li> <li>• CAB</li> <li>• 2 from Sure Start Unit</li> <li>• MWB Consultants</li> </ul>
14 <sup>th</sup> January 2004	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• Programme Administrator</li> <li>• Social Services</li> <li>• MWB Consultants</li> <li>• 5 parents</li> </ul>
10 <sup>th</sup> February 2004	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 5 parents</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• North Stoke PCT</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Programme Administrator</li> <li>• CAB</li> <li>• Social Services</li> </ul>
15 <sup>th</sup> March 2004	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 5 parents</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• CAB</li> <li>• North Stoke PCT</li> <li>• Social Services</li> <li>• Combined Health</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> </ul>
20 <sup>th</sup> April 2004	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 6 parents</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• Premises and Client Services</li> <li>• North Stoke PCT</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Combined Health</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> <li>• Programme Administrator</li> </ul>

11 <sup>th</sup> May 2004	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 5 parents</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• Premises and Client Services</li> <li>• North Stoke PCT</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> <li>• Programme Administrator</li> <li>• EYDCP Manager</li> <li>• Bentilee Community Housing</li> </ul>
8 <sup>th</sup> June 2004	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 5 parents</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Headmistress Bentilee Nursery School</li> <li>• Programme Administrator</li> <li>• Councillor</li> <li>• Social Services</li> </ul>
17 <sup>th</sup> August 2004	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 5 parents</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• North Stoke PCT</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• Programme Administrator</li> <li>• Social Services</li> <li>• CAB</li> <li>• Councillor</li> </ul>
14 <sup>th</sup> September 2004	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Programme Manager</li> <li>• 7 parents</li> <li>• Community Development Officer</li> <li>• Bentilee Nursery</li> <li>• PLA</li> <li>• 2 Programme Administrators</li> <li>• CAB</li> <li>• Volunteer</li> </ul>

## 2.3 Review of Sure Start services

### 2.3.1 Management arrangements

The documentary evidence provides a positive reflection on the management arrangements in place at SureStart4u.

Examining the meeting minutes of the Partnership Board from August 2003 to September 2004, we can identify a number of positive features of management structures. In terms of leadership, the Board is chaired by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, which demonstrates a real level of commitment by the Local Authority. This individual can ensure a strategic development focus and is likely to have considerable input into future mainstreaming of services.

During the early stages of development the Board has worked with a consultant to build up a team and introduce a robust strategic management group. Good practice examples include:

- Consensus on what the Board '*were not responsible for*'
- A vision for '*what will be different in 10 years time because of SureStart4u*'
- Identification of relevant stakeholders
- Best practice in elections
- Terms of Reference for the Board

In order to be successful, partnership working requires real commitment from all agencies involved. Examination meeting attendance suggests that SureStart4u does have this commitment from the agencies making up the Board (see Table 5). Membership is high with good attendance at meetings by professionals and members of the community alike. An average of 14 members attend Board meetings, with the highest attendance reaching 20 in December 2003. Key representatives, such as the Director of Education of Lifelong Learning, the PCT representative, Social Services, the Play and Learning Alliance, CAB and parent representatives attend Board meetings regularly. A NESS synthesis report on partnerships in Sure Start programmes identified attendance of statutory agencies at Board meetings as a key problem area for numerous Sure Starts, however, this is clearly not an issue for SureStart4u. Partnership working in the Bentilee area is likely to have benefited from the long history of investment in cross-cutting initiatives locally. There is likely to be a tradition of working across organisational boundaries, which is of great benefit to SureStart4u. Such a history of partnership working has been identified by NESS as one of the key factors to success amongst Sure Start local programmes nationwide.

In terms of the structure of the Board, the key statutory agencies appear to be represented - the PCT, Social Services and Education. One potential gap could be a training or employment provider such as a local Job Centre. Strong links with this agency are particularly important in the context of the SureStart4u area, with very high levels of workless households. As discussed below, there are a number of parent representatives which make up a high proportion of the Board. The only other possible gap in membership could be local Community and Voluntary groups. These do not appear to be represented on the Partnership Board at present.

It is notable how many parents and carers have been recruited to and retained on the Partnership Board. At least 5 parent representatives regularly attend meetings, with 7 present at the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> September. These members are confident and highly active within this setting. Indeed, two parent representative share Vice Chair status as part of the Board. This must be seen as a positive reflection on the support provided by

SureStart4u to local parents and carers. Another positive finding is that male carers are well represented on the Partnership Board. This is widely felt to be a facilitating factor for the involvement of fathers in Sure Start Local Programmes generally.

As well as Partnership meetings, SureStart4u has regular team meetings which are the focus for operational issues. Through this channel staff give regular project updates, share information and news and discuss projects ideas. This provides a forum for such vital operational matters, allowing the Board to retain its strategic focus.

### 2.3.2 SureStart4u services

The next stage of the review involved examining Performance Management Grids, results and any other documentary information to assess how well Sure Start services are performing. It is very early in the context of the programme to be able to effectively evaluate performance of the projects. These are still establishing themselves and their real impact will be seen over the course of the next year. Despite this, we did examine the documentation to find any initial indications as to the progress of specific services and projects along with barriers to success based on three to four quarters of results.

According to the documentary evidence there have been 21 'projects' set up by SureStart4u. Not all of these projects appear to have been fully commissioned however, with six having no statistical or qualitative results at all. Table 3 shows at a glance which projects have performed well in terms of achieving or exceeding their results for each Quarter. It is clear that certain projects have performed very well, with both Play and Rhyme projects having excellent results, and Community Development and First Contact reaching most targets. The majority of the projects do show very mixed results, however, which could well be expected given that many are still in their early stages.

The results submitted for projects with mixed success were examined to identify common themes which may impact on the progress of projects in these early stages of development. Themes identified have been detailed under sub headings below.

#### **Community Development**

A key factor in the success of any Sure Start programme is its ability to engage members of the community at all levels. At SureStart4u, the Community Development project has made very good progress in relation to its targets, with a notably high proportion of parents making up the Board. Parents and carers appear genuinely involved at a high level in SureStart4u. It may be expected that such involvement is a legacy of previous neighbourhood-based initiatives in the area, which focused on involving the community in decision making. However, SureStart4u believes that their links are with different sections of the community to those targeted by the previous SRB initiative. This aside, it is clear that this involvement in SureStart4u is limited to a highly committed core of parents and carers.

One theme apparent from examining feedback from services is that many other projects are struggling to get parents involved at a higher level. In the case of the Mum2Mum and Domestic Violence projects, involvement of parents as service providers is integral to their success. These projects have, however, been unable to recruit sufficient parent volunteers to enable them to meet their targets. Initially, targets could be reduced to a more attainable level, and raised as parents gain the confidence and receive the support to become more involved. However, it may be the case that parents simply do not wish to be involved in such an intensive way. In order to make this a more attractive option for parents and carers, SureStart4u need to put together a package of support and training. Parents and carers may also be more interested in becoming involved if they were formally rewarded for their commitments, receiving payment for their time. Lack of childcare should not be a

barrier to involvement of parents and carers, as SureStart4u offer access to crèche facilities for volunteers.

Feedback from Mum2Mum also suggests another explanation for problems experienced involving parents and carers in service provision. This stated that whilst a key objective of the project is to recruit local mothers as peer breastfeeding supporters, there is little clarity as to what these supporters would actually do. It is a fruitless exercise recruiting parents to become involved if Sure Start is not clear exactly what the role of parents would be.

It is clear that SureStart4u is able to involve high numbers of parents and carers as service users. Of the 456 families which had used SureStart4u services up to November 2004, 57% had used service 11 times or more. Indeed, almost a third (32%) had used SureStart4u services on more than 25 occasions. It appears that once parents have used a SureStart4u service, they are highly likely to become regular, repeat users. This is an excellent reflection of the quality of service provision and an encouraging statistic for providers of SureStart4u services. Simply, those services which are most likely to succeed are those which are popular with parents, carers and children.

### **Relationships with other service providers/referrals**

Results from individual projects indicate that the majority of SureStart4u services have established good relationships with other local providers, particularly Health Visitors and Midwives. Services such as Mum2Mum and Family Link report excellent working links with these workers and an increase in the number of referrals received from outside agencies.

Despite these good working relationships between SureStart4u and other local providers, E-START data reveals that referrals to services from outside agencies make up only a fraction of total referrals to SureStart4u services (up to November 2004). These accounted for just 81 of the 336 referrals. This figure could, to some extent, be explained by the early stage at which the programme is at, giving SureStart4u only limited time to raise its profile locally, and let other providers know exactly what they can offer to local families. This is something which does need to be developed further in future.

Some comments in the feedback regarding SureStart4u services also identify the need to improve some key partnerships between SureStart4u and other providers. In the Smoking Cessation feedback there is evidence that staff have found it difficult to liaise with local GPs. Staff from Family Support also stated that they had received no referrals from GPs or schools (up to Quarter One 2004/5). If it is the case that there are some areas of partnership working that could be further developed, the programme needs to commit time to building up working relationships with local providers. Partner agencies on the Board may also be able to help with this. In the case of the Smoking Cessation service specifically, Sure Start staff could look to build up relationships with local pharmacists rather than GPs.

### **Service needs**

The mixed results achieved by some of the 21 projects do raise questions about the initial need for certain services. It would be a useful exercise for Sure Start to reassess how the need for each service was identified, i.e. whether it was identified by local parents and carers or professionals. For example, it would seem unlikely that parents would express a need for a Domestic Violence project via a community consultation exercise. The demand for this project may have been identified instead by local professionals who did not correctly anticipate service need in the area or how the service should be delivered.

The 'Fix It' project could also be a service which does not match an expressed need. Local parents and carers may have called for basic repairs to be carried out to properties, but this

may not have centred on Home Safety equipment. Where it appears that there may be a mismatch between need and provision it would be advisable to reassess need.

Evidence from the E-START database also highlights that some services do attract few referrals to them. The discontinued Domestic Violence project and 'Fix It' projects had received very few referrals up to November 2004 (1 and 2 referrals, respectively). Other services with low numbers of referrals made to them are as follows:

- Bentilee Young Parents- 0 referrals
- Childminding network- 3 referrals
- Volunteers – 7 referrals
- Mum2Mum- 8 referrals
- Smoking Cessation/Antenatal Education – 8 referrals

Whilst numbers of referrals do not always reflect levels of need for certain services, some of the numbers of referrals above are surprising. E-START data indicates that there are a high proportion of teenage parents in the area (9% of registered parents- November 2004). We may, therefore, expect a high number of referrals to the Young Parents group, as there does seem to be a real need. The same is true of Mum2Mum and Smoking Cessation. The Bentilee area is one with a high ratio of smoking parents (41% of registered parents are smokers- November 2004) and a low proportion of breastfeeding mothers (8% of women with children under 5 had breastfed- November 2004). It would therefore be expected that there is a need for breastfeeding support and smoking cessation services. The lack of referrals in these instances may indicate that the way in which these services are delivered do not match the needs of the local population. It could also indicate a need to promote the projects that SureStart4u offers more widely amongst local professionals.

### **Provision over holiday periods**

One theme which was relevant to numerous projects was the issue of service provision over holiday periods, particularly over the summer. Family Support and Play and Rhyme projects were unable to reach targets during Quarter 2 of 2004/5 due to a drop in provision over the summer. For example, the Family Support team was unable to meet targets relating to reducing isolation felt by parents due to closure of Stay and Play groups. SureStart4u need to examine why these groups are forced to shut over the summer period. If it reflects a recruitment problem, Sure Start may want to skill up members of their own team.

### **Low attendance at appointments**

The results for the last 3 quarters also indicate that there have been problems with low uptake of some services, particularly with cancellations of mutually arranged appointments. This has been a real problem for Speech and Language and First Steps Psychology. SureStart4u attempted to tackle this earlier in the year by offering home visits to service users; however, problems still exist. Again, SureStart4u may want to reassess need for these services, as well as examine perceptions of service users about the service. In the case of First Steps Psychology and the Domestic Violence project it could be that families associate these projects with stigma as they relate to sensitive issues. SureStart4u should examine this and ensure that future promotion of projects dispels any such perceptions.

### **Links between SureStart4u services**

Finally, it is clear that the work of a number of the services and projects provided by SureStart4u are very much linked. E-START data reveal that the vast majority of referrals to Sure Start services originate from other Sure Start services. Of the 336 made to date, 200 are from SureStart4u, with 92 from Family Support services specifically.

Whilst good links between projects can be excellent in ensuring that families are able to access necessary services, interdependence can be a disadvantage when other services are underperforming. For example, the 'Fix It' service is reliant for referrals on the Health Information and Safety service. This service has had mixed success in terms of achieving its results, and therefore may not be likely to generate many referrals for the 'Fix It' service.

### 2.3.3 Gaps in provision

Examining the range of services in Table 2, it is difficult to identify many gaps in provision at this early stage. The only obvious area of shortage (based on the documentary evidence alone) is childcare. Table 2 indicates that there are four projects planned by SureStart4u which relate to provision of childcare. These projects all have Performance Management grids but not one project has any results. This suggests that either the projects are not in operation or are not being evaluated at all. In fact, SureStart4u is providing childcare facilities, however this is not being monitored. Not only is the provision of good quality, affordable childcare a major aim of Sure Start local programmes, but the increasing shift in ideology towards helping parents and carers into work renders the provision of childcare increasingly vital. As a result it is vital to ensure that any project or initiative provided by SureStart4u involving childcare is closely monitored to allow evaluation of its performance.

E-START data also reveals that in the SureStart4u area, there are a very high proportion of families which do not have a household member in work. This applies to 54% of registered families (November 2004). Bearing in mind this statistic, as well as the shifting emphasis to helping parents into work, the lack of training opportunities which are documented as being provided by SureStart4u could be seen as a gap in provision. Again, SureStart4u confirmed that they do offer a range of training opportunities to parents and carers, however, these are not planned and monitored as 'projects'. This is clearly an area for action, as all services offered by the programme should be monitored closely to ensure that they are meeting local needs and performing effectively. On a similar theme, some of qualitative feedback refers to the potential benefits of confidence building courses. Considering the high proportion of teenage parents in the area this might be particularly important in the context of the local population.

### 2.3.4 Conclusions

At this stage, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of SureStart4u services by examining the documentary evidence. At such an early point in the programme's life, projects are still establishing themselves which may account for often mixed results. Despite this, there have clearly been a number of successes so far. The Community Development project has been extremely successful in ensuring that parents and carers have a real stake in decision-making through representation on the Board. Other projects, such as Benefits and Money Advice and Play and Rhyme have clearly had a positive impact on local families. The most that can be inferred from the evidence at present is that those services which are performing well and meeting targets are having a positive impact on the families that they serve. It is, however, very early in the life of the programme to be able to draw meaningful conclusions about the success of individual services. The real results will be revealed over the next 12 months.

## 2.4 Recommendations for future areas of evaluation

This final section identifies areas of potential future evaluation, which have been identified through the review of documentary evidence.

One aspect of evaluation which we would strongly suggest completing would be the re-evaluation of need for projects which are consistently not reaching targets set, such as the 'Fix It' service. This should tell the programme what the original need for the service was,

how this was identified and whether it is still a genuine need of local families. Consultation should be carried out with service users, non-service users, as well as key professionals and providers. If there is a real need for the service, evaluation will highlight whether the service could be provided in a more effective way, or, more simply, whether the targets set really reflect a genuine measure of success of the service.

Despite examples of good practice discussed by the programme, such as the Loyalty points scheme for service users, these are not currently recorded as 'projects'. We would advise that such schemes be evaluated and tracked to assess what part they are playing in the development of the programme, looking at patterns of use and awareness of the scheme. This would also allow SureStart4u to demonstrate examples of good practice which could be disseminated via NESS with other local programmes.

Before carrying out any future evaluation of specific services or aspects of the programme, such as publicity, it is vital to ensure that SureStart4u is collecting all evidence necessary for the thorough analysis of the service or evaluation area. This would include data about reach or services users (should be stored on E-START), as well as perceptions of providers, information on costs and any outputs or outcomes that have taken place.

## 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

This Chapter presents some of the key findings of the review of documentary evidence provided by SureStart4u. It is accompanied with a set of recommendations for future service delivery and monitoring practices.

### 3.1 Conclusions

#### 3.1.1 Management Information Systems

- SureStart4u has an excellent monitoring system in place. This is based on both quantitative and qualitative information, allowing for tracking of services to take place, as well as providing explanatory data for assessing performance. This system allows for effective monitoring of services to take place. These robust structures allow SureStart4u to identify underperforming services and to take any necessary action at an early stage.
- As well as being robust, the structures in place at SureStart4u are flexible, allowing SureStart4u to adapt to better meet the needs of its population. This is demonstrated by the fact that SureStart4u has been able to modify the aims and targets for individual services. This also illustrates that SureStart4u is monitoring and using its Management Information Systems as intended.
- There is no doubting the quality of the systems in place; however, these are only ever as effective as the way in which they are used by those providing data. SureStart4u's monitoring systems are greatly reliant on staff, parents, providers and outside agencies recording information. This aspect of the system could be its weakness. Indeed few projects have all the results that we would expect to see. There appears to be problems with specific outside agencies providing data to SureStart4u, most notably Health Visitors and other health professionals.
- Not all services provided by SureStart4u are recorded and monitored as 'projects'. These include the loyalty points system, as well as training opportunities.
- The majority of targets or 'results' used to monitor the progress of services are measurable and meaningful. However, some targets are consistently not measured or reached by Sure Start projects. These targets are quite often simply unattainable, and not reflective of real life conditions. Others are highly subjective or, as 'lag indicators' will take many years to see any change.

#### 3.1.2 Management Structures

- SureStart4u has excellent management structures in place. The Partnership Board demonstrates strong leadership from a key local stakeholder, who will be instrumental in future mainstreaming. The structures and terms of reference of the Board have been well conceived, allowing the Board to retain a strategic focus. In terms of membership, all the key statutory agencies are represented.
- The commitment demonstrated by Partnership Board members is impressive, with high levels of membership and regular attendance from both statutory agencies and parent/carer representatives. The levels of involvement from parents and carers is a particular achievement, with these representatives very active in this setting. This is very encouraging for the future development of the Programme. This commitment to partnership working is likely to have been benefited greatly by the long history of working across organisational boundaries in the local area.

### 3.1.3 SureStart4u services

- It is very difficult to judge the success of SureStart4u projects at this stage, based on the documentary evidence. These projects have only been running during the last 12 months, and will still be establishing themselves. We would, therefore expect to see the mixed results which are reflected in the documentation. The real impact of these services will be seen over the next 12 months. It is also difficult to be able to meaningfully judge a project's success based on documentary evidence alone. This only offers one viewpoint of the project; however, it is undoubtedly vital in contributing to the wider picture of a project's success.
- The most that can be inferred from the documentary evidence at present is that those Sure Start services which are performing well and meeting targets are having a positive impact on the families that they serve. The User Satisfaction Baseline does indicate that many service users do believe that Sure Start services have had an impact on their family. In this consultation, 60% (n=103) of respondents who had used a service indicated that SureStart4u had made a difference to their lives.
- Despite the generally mixed results, it is clear that some projects are performing very well. This is reinforced by the findings of the Baseline User Satisfaction Consultation (the results of which are presented in a self-standing report), which revealed very high levels of satisfaction with SureStart4u services and provision. In addition to this, it is obvious that SureStart4u is able to involve a high number of parents and carers as services users. A high number of these are repeat users, indicating a very high level of satisfaction with service provision.
- Community development is progressing very well in the SureStart4u area. The Community Development project itself is performing well, with parents and carers genuinely involved at a very high level in SureStart4u. It appears that it is an established core of parents who are consistently involved in projects.
- SureStart4u has developed good links with outside agencies, with Sure Start projects receiving numerous referrals for Health Visitors and Midwives. The Baseline revealed that these professional have also been influential in raising awareness of SureStart4u as a whole. Despite this, the majority of referrals to SureStart4u services still originate from inside the programme indicating high levels of interdependence between projects.

## 3.2 Recommendations

### 3.2.1 Management Information Systems

**R1** All 'projects' monitored by SureStart4u need to have a Performance Management Grid. This will identify what needs the service is attempting to meet.

**R2** Tracking of results reveals that not all of the projects are being regularly monitored. SureStart4u needs to single out these projects and identify reasons for the lack of monitoring data. This may be a problem with unrealistic or immeasurable results, or difficulties with staff, parents or outside agencies providing data.

**R3** SureStart4u has indicated that some services have been decommissioned, however, it is not clear in the documentary evidence where this has occurred. SureStart4u needs to ensure that all decommissioned projects are fully documented, along with reasons for this. If a formal decommissioning process is not in place this should be established.

**R4** Some targets are not displayed on the monitoring forms if they have not been measured during the quarter. SureStart4u needs to ensure that these are recorded on the quarterly monitoring sheets so that these are not neglected. It is important to examine why these results are not currently being measured.

- If targets are not measured due to outside agencies not providing this data (e.g. Smoking Cessation), we recommend that formal information sharing protocols are developed with these agencies. These need to detail exactly what information SureStart4u needs, when it is needed and how often.
- The review found that some consistently unmeasured targets are subjective or over complicated. These targets need to be reset, taking into account the need for SMART indicators.
- Some targets set will only see change over a long period of time. These 'lag indicators' will be of no use in monitoring a projects success in the short term. Instead Sure Start should replace these with 'lead indicators'; these are indicators which may preempt longer term changes.
- If certain results are consistently not being measured it may be the case that they are simply not useful in measuring the effectiveness or impact of a service.
- SureStart4u needs to assess whether the member of staff responsible for recording a particular target has received sufficient briefing and support to enable them to provide the information required. This should be a priority area for action. Training needs may arise as a result.

**R5** The review has highlighted that one flaw of SureStart4u's monitoring is its reliance on staff, parents and providers as recorders of data. It is important that SureStart4u consider ways of making sure that the system is as robust as it can be in recognition of this.

- SureStart4u should not rely on parents themselves to record data relating to targets. SureStart4u need to look at other ways of recording this data- e.g., by fully trained and briefed Sure Start staff during Play and Rhyme groups or visits.
- Health Visitors already have considerable pressures on their time. SureStart4u may benefit, therefore, from accessing their data from other sources. If this is not possible, SureStart4u could arrange a training session with Health Visitors which outlines how to collect data accurately and stresses the importance of this in terms of service development.
- For results where data is received consistently late, the Information Sharing Protocols with data providing agencies recommended in R4 above should assist with the provision of timely data. Alternatively other sources for this data should be identified.
- All stakeholders who are expected to provide data, statistical or qualitative, should be consulted as to whether they need additional support in this role. SureStart4u should then provide training for staff and providers, helping them to record data robustly, accurately and practically. In this session it is important to explain why SureStart4u needs such information, and how it will contribute to service improvement. It may also be of use to provide support to information providers so that they can modify their own indicators in future. If this training session were provided for a multi agency audience it would serve to further strengthen working relationships between SureStart4u and other local providers.

**R6** SureStart4u should review results which are not being met consistently and consider whether this is a reflection on the service itself, or whether targets are simply not attainable.

- Some targets are not reflective of real life conditions e.g. drop off in provision over summer holidays. These need to be modified to ensure that a misleading picture of a project's success is not presented.
- In these early stages of the programme some targets may be too stretching e.g. Parental Involvement in Mum2Mum. It would be advisable to lower these targets at this stage and increase these as time progresses.

**R7** SureStart4u needs to ensure that they are monitoring all services and facilities that they are providing as 'projects'. Without this there is no way of closely tracking services and ensuring that they are continuing to meet the needs of local families. Projects which should be recorded included the loyalty points scheme, training and childcare provision. Currently, the documentary evidence does not give a full picture of services provided by SureStart4u.

### **Management structures**

**R8** Whilst statutory groups and parents and carers are well represented on the Board, membership by Community and Voluntary organisations is very low. SureStart4u need to actively recruit such organisations to the Partnership Board.

**R9** In recognition of the high proportion of workless households in the programme area, a representative from the Job Centre would be an important addition to the Board.

### **SureStart4u services**

**R10** Despite the fact that we would expect mixed results at this stage, some projects are clearly not performing well in terms of meeting targets. SureStart4u need to re-evaluate need for these services. SureStart4u could carry out a consultation with service users, providers and other key stakeholders to investigate this further.

**R11** At this stage we would suggest that SureStart4u lower its targets with regard to involving parents/carers in service delivery for a range of different projects. It is unrealistic to expect parents to get involved in every initiative at this early stage. These targets can then be increased when parents/carers receive the necessary support to get involved.

**R12** In order to encourage more parents and carers to become involved in service provision, SureStart4u must make this an attractive option for them. Parents need to be provided with confidence building activities, training, support and childcare. It may also be necessary to offer parents rewards such as financial incentives in exchange for their time. Lastly, it is vital to ensure that parents and carers are not involved tokenistically; they need to be involved with a clear purpose, role and benefit in mind.

**R13** SureStart4u need to actively recruit new parents and carers to become involved in the programme. Whilst, there is a committed core of parents and carers already involved, SureStart4u should not place too much pressure on these parents to become involved in every aspect of the programme. It is important to develop participation from all sections of the community, and ensure that no parents/carers are forced to become disengaged with the programme due to excessive time commitments at SureStart4u.

**R14** Documentary evidence suggests that provision in the SureStart4u area drops off considerably over the summer. SureStart4u should evaluate reasons for this and assess whether local families are receiving sufficient support and opportunities over this time. SureStart4u and its partner agencies should then look to fill this gap if needed.

**R15** Certain services appear to be receiving very few referrals from within SureStart4u or outside agencies. Sure Start should evaluate why these services are attracting such low number of referrals. There may be a need for increased promotion of these services amongst local providers. SureStart4u could also examine how their services are promoted by providers to local families. Additionally, Sure Start should examine perceptions of these specific SureStart4u services amongst local agencies- to ensure that no negative perceptions of these services exist amongst local providers.

**R16** SureStart4u appears to be receiving low numbers of referrals from certain key providers including GPs and local schools. SureStart4u needs to invest time in building up these relationships with outside agencies, perhaps making use of established relationships with individuals on the Board.