EVALUATION OF
YOUNG PARENT’S GROUP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Young Parent’s Group has run from October 2004 each Wednesday between 2.30pm and 4.30pm at the Sure Start Rainbow Rooms, Quay Road. 8 parents and 5 parents-to-be have attended the group.

The main aims of the Young Parent Group are to:

- Improve health and well being
- Facilitate engagement with Sure Start & mainstream support services
- Offer a gateway to informal advice & information
- Make appropriate referrals to specialist services
- Access peer support and friendship

Evaluation of the group has been continuous and taken a variety of forms and included parents, facilitators, involved team members and crèche workers.

FINDINGS

The young parents enjoy having the time in the group to 'just being themselves'. They have found out about other activities whilst at the group and met several of the team members which has encouraged them to attend
other sessions. This is helping them to become more confident and help with the isolation caused by being a young mother, often without the support of a partner or family. Other team members, including the Nurse-Practitioner and Advisor have been consulted and have offered advice over different issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

♦ That the group continues to run throughout the year as it has become an important part of the lives of the young parents that regularly attend.

♦ That there is a strong link with the Dad’s Group workers for the dads and dads-to-be.

♦ The group is linked to the new antenatal/postnatal support project, including practical parenting support for young parents.

♦ That funding is available to take the young parents out together with their children, perhaps to another Sure Start.

♦ As the young parents gain in confidence they will take on more responsibility in running the group.
INTRODUCTION

As a result of research conducted by two young parents for their Community Parents project, a Young Parent’ Group was set up as a pilot and ran over a 5 week period from July to August 2003. Following this a Young Parent’s Group has run from October 2004 each Wednesday at the Sure Start Rainbow Rooms, Quay Road.

Two young parents were consulted initially regarding the programme content and invitations were sent out to all young parents registered on the data base. The time slot was 4.30-6.30pm and tea was provided for children and parents. Feedback was that the original time was too late for parents with babies and young children and was changed to 2.30pm-4.30pm offering light refreshments.

The main aims of the Young Parent Group are to:

- Improve health and well being
- Facilitate engagement with Sure Start & mainstream support services
- Offer a gateway to informal advice & information
- Make appropriate referrals to specialist services
- Access peer support and friendship
The Young Parent’s Group provides a cross-cutting service linking in with Sure Start Objectives 1, 2, 5, & 8., which seeks to offer support to parents, as well as improve the child's emotional and social development and ability to learn.

**METHODOLOGY**

Evaluation of the Young Parent’s Group has taken a number of forms:

- Observation by staff facilitating the sessions
- Observation by crèche workers
- Informal weekly feedback from parents
- Comments on crèche provision by parents
- Comments from Nurse Practitioner
- Tick box evaluation form
- Face to face questionnaire facilitated by team member (not known to the group)

N.B. As some of the young parents have difficulty with reading, the main part of the evaluation was done by one to one interviews by another member of the Sure Start team.

**FINDINGS**

Young parents feel that they like:

- Having some time for themselves

  "It gives me time away from my little boy"

  "I don’t have any time for myself - only after bedtime"
• Meeting other young parents”
  "I wanted to get out and meet people my own age”

• Being part of a group
  “I was glad it was a small group because I don’t mix easily”

• Being involved in choosing what they do
  “Cheryl asked us for any suggestions, we are currently starting up a gym”

• Finding out about Sure Start groups
  “I have starting attending more and put my name down for others”

• Knowing more about different courses
  “I joined the cooking one with Simone”

An important advantage of the crèche provision is that it enables children to interact with other children, and it is much appreciated by the young parents:

"I have no family in Bridlington that can give me a break with my little girl, so it’s good to come to the Young Parent’s Group. My little girl enjoys the crèche, especially reading the ‘Peek a Boo’ book every week. She asks to go to the crèche every time we pass the building! “ Adele (Parent)

"When my son and I were ill we didn’t get leave the house for 5 days. We came to the Young Parent’s Group because I just had to get out. Even though my little boy was not very well they coped marvelously with him in the crèche and he came out smiling! As a young parent it is good to get a break and have ‘adult’ time for a couple of hours. I had only left him with family previously - the crèche workers are marvels!” Vicky (Parent)
Crèche workers have noticed that children have settled well and enjoy being in the crèche, even if they have not been left before.

“This was the first time this little boy had been left in a crèche and over the weeks he is gradually becoming more confident about being in the crèche and being separated from his mother.”

“I have seen a big difference in this little girl since she started coming to the crèche. When she first came she wouldn’t settle to do anything but now she will play with jigsaws and glue and colour. She is not a child that is able to interact with other children but we hope to see a difference especially as mum is now coming to a range of activities.”

Kelly (Crèche Worker)

During the 3 months different parents have benefited from;

- Contacting the furniture warehouse (one parent received delivery of several pieces of furniture at no cost)
- Advice on Health through Warmth which has resulted in provision of extra heaters & draft proofing of a very cold flat with inadequate heating
- A pamper session by the college
- Opportunity to explore their health needs and those of their children, facilitated by the nurse practitioner
- Advice and assurance from Sue Neild (KIDS) with regard a little girl with some sight problems.
• Information given by the Parent-Learning Co-ordinator regarding training at E R College
• Information regarding different Sure Start sessions and activities, such as the Toy Library.
• Attending different activities for the first time e.g. Music & Movement, Talkabout, KIDS Play Development
• Attending training courses e.g. Cooking on a budget
• Referral given to Nursery Nurse for advice on child's behaviour
• Advice given by Advisor for young mother who urgently needed accommodation.
• Assistance by staff member in completing official forms

Whilst exploring health needs, the group requested an opportunity to attend gym sessions, so after consultation with them a 6 week 'Body Boost' has been set up in a local gym with crèche facilities at the Rainbow Rooms. Young parents have given this project 'ownership' by designing their own Body Boost logo, which will be put onto T-shirts. They have also collected names from other parents who would like to join them in the gym. This activity has raised their self-esteem by encouraging them to take part in setting up a project of their own.

Through contact with the Nurse Practitioner, one young parent accessed a minor illness consultation, resulting in a prescription (using independent nurse prescribing) and a recommendation for self referral to the sleep clinic.
Another parent accessed information and advice on eczema management. Smoking cessation has been discussed informally within the group (as part of a natural conversation whilst engaging in craft activities) including passive smoking and effects on childhood asthma, and the links with glue ear and respiratory tract infections. Reducing the risks of passive smoking and the concept of 'smoke free' homes were discussed, although none of the parents felt able to give up smoking. Stress and concerns re: weight were sighted as reasons for not attempting to stop smoking. Stress reduction techniques were touched upon. The young parents have made independent steps towards stress management through accessing the 'Naughty not Necessarily' course and also through designing the 'Body Boost' project. The Nurse Practitioner will keep the group informed of the new Smoking Cessation projects within Sure Start and also of mainstream support.
CONCLUSIONS

We feel that we are able to offer a flexible service that is ‘tailored’ to each individual young parent and young parent-to-be.

The group allows the young parents to concentrate on meeting their own needs and see themselves as important and worthy of attention, which they are not normally able to do. It supports them to participate in the group and interact with other members, which is important, since some lack confidence in mixing and building positive relationships with other adults. They have also found that they can discuss their problems and gain support from one another.

Two of the young parents who come to the group are now attending activities with their children such as Talkabout and Music & Movement, started a cookery course and enrolled on the ‘Naughty not Necessarily’ parenting course as their confidence has grown. Three young parents have signed up for the ‘Brilliant Birthday’ short course which will be commencing in April.

Children have settled well in the crèche, even those who have not been left in a crèche by their mother previously. The crèche provision gives the young parents an opportunity to discuss some of their problems with the staff and they have been willing to be referred to more specialist services e.g. Advisor. For some of these young parents, this has been the only time that they spend away from their children.

"I have made new friends, it’s good to get out instead of being stuck at home all the time. It’s great to be myself and have some time for myself“

"It gets me out - It’s wonderful really“
RECOMMENDATIONS

♦ That the group continues to run throughout the year as it has become an important part of the lives of the young parents that regularly attend.

♦ That we set up a ‘baseline’ evaluation for new members in order to measure their confidence and growth as a parent.

♦ Evaluation will continue to include regular discussions, both individually and collectively to ensure the group is meeting the needs of the young parents who attend.

♦ That there is a strong link with the Dad’s Group workers for the dads and dads-to-be.

♦ The group is linked to the new antenatal/postnatal support project, including practical parenting support for young parents. Young parents are actively involved in the development of this new project.

♦ That funding is available to take the young parents out together with their children, perhaps to another Sure Start.
♦ As the young parents gain in confidence they will be encouraged to take on more responsibility in running the group.