

Sure Start Northern Hull Evaluation Strategy Jan 2004 - May 2005

Evaluation at North Hull: the role of the University

The partner agency managing evaluation for North Hull is the University of Lincoln, Department of Social Work at the School of Health and Social Care in Hull. There is a full time member of the university staff in post at the programme and the institution has supplied all of the evaluation work so far in the programme and is contracted to go on doing so through the next PSA period until 2006.

It is envisioned that during this next 18 months the University will be able to broaden the scope of its research with children and children's services through the development of a 'Children's Research Centre'. This will also enable University and Sure Start management to take part in the wider national debates concerning effective practice and the ways forward.

An individual strategy

There is a team of University research/evaluation staff based at Lincoln and because of this there is a single strategy for evaluation across Sure Start there, with some regional variations to suit programmes. Although this is not currently feasible in Hull with currently only a single evaluation worker employed by the University, meetings in Lincoln are attended and insights/developments discussed that can be of benefit to evaluation in Hull as well.

The strategy below is the result of looking at the needs and priorities at the North Hull programme, and putting them together with the approach of the University to evaluation/research, and the requirements and guidance from the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS).

Objectives: where do we want to be?

The strategy is designed to keep the programme focused on the core values of Sure Start which are to:

- Co-ordinate, streamline and add value to existing services
- Involve parents, grandparents and other carers
- Avoid stigma by ensuring that all families are able to use Sure Start services
- Ensure lasting support by linking to services for older children
- Be culturally appropriate and sensitive to particular needs
- Promote the participation of all local families in the design and working of the programme

According to NESS, local evaluation can be summarised in three categories of activity:

1. Progress towards Sure Start targets and objectives, and any additional local ones
2. How the programme is working in practice, eg: management, communication, parental involvement, partnership and inter-agency working
3. Cost-effectiveness

In addition, all findings generated through the local evaluation process need to be informing the ongoing planning of the programme. Making sure that there are clear pathways to enable this to take place is part of this strategy.

All major evaluation activities in this stage of the programme need also to consider issues relating to mainstreaming in preparation for the reduction in funding expected in 2006.

Identified evaluation priorities for Northern Hull

Since it is not feasible to evaluate everything all of the time, this strategy addresses priorities for the programme over the coming year and a half, based on the individual circumstances of the North Hull programme and evaluation progress to date. Strategy is reviewed and updated on an annual basis in May by NESS, but in this case there has been a need to review and update strategy from the beginning of 2004. In order to stay in line with NESS guidance, however, this document will address the full period until May 2005 when an updated strategy will be devised.

Five priority areas (not in any order) have been identified for Sure Start Northern Hull:

- 1. Demonstrating the value, quality and uniqueness of key aspects of the programme**
- 2. Involving parents more effectively in the management and evaluation of the programme**
- 3. Linking to services for older children and obtaining their views**
- 4. Communication in the internal running of the programme**
- 5. Ensuring access to Sure Start for more families in the community**

Key activities relating to each priority area

1. Demonstrating the value, quality and uniqueness of key aspects of the programme

- Writing in report form the material collated by the Speech Therapy Team. This evidences the journey that the team has taken in developing an 'added value' service for Sure Start, and the positive results for the community. Material was originally presented in the form of a workshop to a national conference in 2003.
- Conducting a specific cost-effectiveness exercise in one service / activity of the programme initially, to lend more information to the unit costing completed in 2003.
- The possible commissioning of a detailed study to show the particular value of the Sure Start approach to midwifery, and the benefits to the mainstream service. This will be initially explored by means of interview / group discussion and further options for study considered depending on issues raised.
- Evaluation of results from questionnaires completed on a one-to-one basis at the large parents' group operated by Home Start.
- Collating results of performance statistics collected in local nursery schools, presenting them in summary form, and evaluating their contribution to the development of play and nursery plans currently in progress through the Children's Centre.

2. Involving the parents more effectively in the management and evaluation of the programme

- Noting what the parents' experience has been of participation in the programme and in the decision-making processes, and what their vision is for future involvement. Assessing how well they have been prepared and trained for acting as representatives on the Boards and how improvements could be made.
- Involving parents in the 2004 User Satisfaction Survey, planning and implementation stages.

- Conducting a PA/mapping exercise with parents having varying degrees of involvement, to establish perceptions of, as well as knowledge of, childcare options. This can be related back to the parental responses on the programme's 2001 'Early Years' survey and other recent city wide research looking at childcare issues.
- Involving parents in discussing ideas and settings for consulting older children from local families.
- Producing one or more parent case studies to support evaluation material. Developing parent stories as an additional feature of the information pack for newly contacted families, or in the form of a progress / publicity publication produced with and for parents.

3. Linking to services for older children and obtaining their views

- Assessing at intervals throughout the year, the progress of attempts to draw together providers of play services in the area and co-ordinate a 'play partnership' through Sure Start's Play Team.
- Consulting children of older primary age concerning their views of services in the area through holiday club and/or other activities.

4. Communication in the internal running of the programme

- Mapping the existing evaluation methods, and use of evaluation findings by each staff role in the programme, recorded by flow chart, and including action plans to address gaps. Keeping an updated file that records all ongoing evaluation activity by each member of staff, and any support / training needs they may have in relation to evaluation.
- Mapping the decision making structure in the fairly complex multi-agency structure of the Family Support Team. This will form part of the wider evaluation of current developments in that particular service.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of changes in internal communication brought about between September 2003 and March 2004, including programme meetings, team work and staff training.

5. Ensuring access to Sure Start for more families in the community

- Detailed evaluation of the full range and implication of changes planned for the Family Support Team as they are implemented over the year, as the programme's primary support to families with a higher degree of need. An initial assessment will be followed up by evaluation of progress and effectiveness at two monthly intervals, and compared to effectiveness before the proposed changes were initiated.
- Reviewing and communicating the findings from consultation with primary children so that views are taken account of in all relevant areas of the programme.
- Making closer links with the Traveller Education Service in order to find out from Traveller families what their needs in relation to Sure Start might be, and producing a piece of written evaluation to show evidence of this process working at North Hull.
- Investigating ways of receiving reliable information about any housing of Asylum Seekers in the area (following up recommendations made about housing office contacts in the 2001 parent survey), and looking at what responses could appropriately be made by the programme, how quickly and how effectively.

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