LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

Citation:
South, J and Walker, J and Newell, C (2005) Evaluation of Sure Start Mellow Valley: Findings from the stakeholder survey. Project Report. Centre for Health Promotion Research, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, UK.

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:
https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/427/

Document Version:
Monograph (Other)

Evaluation of Sure Start Mellow Valley: Findings from the stakeholder survey

April 2005

leeds metropolitan university

Report complied by
Jane South
Joy Walker
Caroline Newell

Centre for Health Promotion Research
Leeds Metropolitan University

Evaluation of Sure Start Mellow Valley: Findings from the stakeholder survey

April 2005

Address for Correspondence:

Jane South
Centre for Health Promotion
Queen Square House
Leeds Metropolitan University
Leeds LS1 3HE

e-mail: j.south@leedsmet.ac.uk
Tel: (0113) 2832600 (ext) 4406
Fax: 0113 2831916

http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/health/healthpromotion/index.htm

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank:

- Rebecca Ayrton for her help in conducting some of the interviews.

- Sure Start staff for their assistance in setting up interviews and focus groups.

- All the parents and professionals who gave their time to be interviewed.

- Marianne Kennedy for her administrative support.

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF BOXES

Section 1: Introduction

Sure Start is a government programme which aims to make a difference to children 0-4 years and their families through supporting parents, increasing childcare availability and improving the health and social development of young children. Local Sure Start programmes seek to involve parents and other partners in their work. Sure Start principles are listed below. Sure Starts will be changing with the government's commitment to build Children's Centres in every community by 2010.

Box 1: The Sure Start principles
(from **www.surestart.gov.uk/aboutsurestart/thesurestartprinciples2/**)

1. Working with parents and children
Every family should get access to a range of services that will deliver better outcomes for both children and parents, meeting their needs and stretching their aspirations.

2. Services for everyone
But not the same service for everyone. Families have distinctly different needs and services should recognise and respond to these varying needs.

3. Flexible at point of delivery
All services should be designed to encourage access.

4. Starting very early
Services for young children and parents should start at the first antenatal visit.

5. Respectful and transparent
Services should be customer driven, whether or not the service is free.

6. Community driven and professionally coordinated
All professionals with an interest in children and families should be sharing expertise and listening to local people on service priorities.

7. Outcome driven
All services for children and parents need to have as their core purpose better outcomes for children.

Sure Start Mellow Valley

Sure Start Mellow Valley covers the areas of Little London, Woodhouse and part of Meanwood. Mellow Valley is a 6th wave Sure Start programme and was approved in April 2003, so it is now entering its third year. The Children's Society is the lead partner and accountable body. The team of staff is led by a programme manager and there are co-ordinators covering three core areas of work:
- Strengthening Families and Communities;
- Improving Children's Ability to Learn;
- Improving Health.

According to recent figures there are approximately 600 children aged 0-4 years living in the Sure Start Mellow Valley area. It is an ethnically diverse area (see Table 1) and there are many overseas students and people who have recently moved into the area, particularly in Little London and Woodhouse.

Table 1: Census 2001 - Ethnic groups in Sure Start Mellow Valley

Ethnic group	Little London/ Woodhouse Sure Start area	Meanwood Sure Start area
White British	70 %	84%
White Irish/Other White	7 %	4 %
Mixed	4 %	4 %
Asian or Asian British	6 %	3 %
Black or Black British	7%	4 %
Other ethnic groups (including Chinese)	6 %	1 %

Evaluation

Sure Start Mellow Valley commissioned the Centre for Health Promotion Research to undertake an evaluation of the programme. The evaluation will help find out if Sure Start Mellow Valley is achieving its goals and having a positive impact on families and young children. A Baseline User Satisfaction Survey was carried out in 2004. This has been followed by a stakeholder survey, which was carried out between January and March 2005. The objectives of the stakeholder survey have been to:
- obtain stakeholder perspectives on how Sure Start Mellow Valley is contributing to meeting the needs of families with young children;
- identify the overall approach and mechanisms being used by the programme and influencing factors;

- capture any early achievements (outcomes) and points of learning;
- investigate the reach and extent of parental involvement in the local programme;
- highlight key challenges for the future development of the programme.

This report presents the findings from the stakeholder survey. The next section describes the evaluation methods and approach. The findings are then discussed in three sections. The first examines the development of the programme and what progress has been made in achieving targets. The following section looks at perceptions of programme goals and the approaches used to achieve change. Parental involvement and partnership working are both examined in depth. The third section discusses the current and future challenges facing Sure Start Mellow Valley. The report ends by highlighting some key areas for consideration with recommendations for further evaluation.

Section 2: Evaluation methods

The evaluation of Sure Start Mellow Valley is based on an evaluation approach which takes account of the local context and investigates the methods used in the programme and how these lead to change[1]. In other words the focus is not just on what works but also finding out why it works. The stakeholder survey was designed to incorporate the perspectives of a range of different stakeholder groups, including parents, staff, board members, and other professionals working with the programme. Qualitative methods were used to gain an in-depth understanding of the programme development and to capture the experiences and views of people involved. In the first stage, semi structured interviews were conducted with a range of individuals involved in the programme. In order to include parents with different experiences of involvement, a number of focus groups were conducted. These were as follows:

- A small focus group of parent board members (including long standing and new members)
- Two focus groups at Parent Forums (one included parents from the Chinese community with an interpreter present);
- Short interviews with two parents at a Bumps and Babes session at Beulah Hall.

Preliminary analysis of the data was then undertaken. In the second stage, key findings were fed back to a Sure Start staff meeting. The purpose of the meeting was for validation of some of the preliminary findings and collection of additional data on methods and approaches. Overall 45 people participated in the stakeholder survey, including 15 parents (see Table 2).

Both interviews and focus groups covered a similar range of topics including the development of Sure Start Mellow Valley and influencing factors, goals and achievements, parental involvement, partnership working and future challenges (see Appendix 1 & 2). The interviews were tape recorded or detailed notes taken. All the data were analysed using an analysis framework based on the evaluation objectives. Cross cutting issues and themes were identified and mapped.

The stakeholder survey adhered to ethical principles. Participation was voluntary and everyone was asked for their consent. Respondents' anonymity was respected. Quotes and reported experiences have not been attributed in this report except where specific examples are highlighted with the permission of the individual concerned.

---

[1] The evaluation methodology is based on Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), Theories of Change (Fulbright-Andersen et al, 1998), and WHO (1998) Health Promotion Evaluation.

Table 2: Profile of stakeholders participating in the evaluation of Sure Start Mellow Valley

Organisation / agency	Professional group
Interviews with Sure Start management and administration	2 Sure Start Mellow Valley staff
Mellow Valley Sure Start team meeting [some preliminary findings shared + further data collection undertaken]	16 Staff (This included Parent Involvement workers, a range of Early Years Development workers, Family Support workers, Parent training Coordinator and information worker + 3 students from a range of disciplines).
Interview with the Children's Society	1 senior manager
Interviews with the Sure Start Management Board members (see Partnership agencies)	1 statutory sector professional 1 non-statutory sector professional
Interviews with professional from Partnership agencies: [2] Housing	1 Little London Area Housing Officer 1 Housing Officer covering Meanwood
Social Services	1 Social worker
Health Care	1 Health Visitor covering Meanwood 1 Health Visitor based in Woodhouse
Early Years Service	1 Manager
Education	1 Head teacher 1 Sure Start teacher
Voluntary Sector	1 Leeds Voice staff Co-ordinator
Focus groups with parents from the Management Board	4 parents
Focus groups with parents from Parent's Forum	4 Woodhouse/ Little London parents (2 English speaking + 2 Chinese speaking) 5 Meanwood parents
Short interviews with parents attending baby massage	2 parents
Total	45 participants Ratio 14 professionals: 15 parents (excluding staff from team meeting)

---

[2] Some of the professionals from across the range of partnership agencies were also members of the Sure Start Mellow Valley Management Board.

Section 3: Where are we now?
The programme development and early achievements

a) Programme Development

This section looks at how Sure Start Mellow Valley has developed up to the current stage of the programme. Seven main themes emerged from the data analysis. These will now be examined in turn.

- **Parent-led programme.** The parents initially asked professionals to support them in a bid as they considered that a Sure Start was needed in their community. From this embryonic stage, parents have continued to have a strong influence and voice in Sure Start Mellow Valley. This is still the expectation for the future. In addition, commitment to providing core services has widened as the programme has developed but from the beginning both parents and professionals have provided core stability to the programme development. A network of families and professionals, coupled with strong relationships with the Management Board and partnerships with other agencies, has developed. This is discussed further in Section 4.

- **No Blue print to follow.** Before this Sure Start came into being there was nothing quite like this available to young families in the area. One stakeholder described how Sure Start was unique and developed into a 'hub and spokes' model, which could initially respond to needs by acting like a one stop centre:

    "*Sure Start it's unique to society … for families I see Sure Start as a hub with the other spokes coming off it….as a one stop centre.*"

    (Board member)

- **Equity in decision making processes.** This was a cross cutting theme throughout the programme development. For example, there has been an equal ratio of parents to professionals on the Management Board. There appears a strong partnership between parents and professionals and a real sense that "we" are developing this:

    ".. (it) *very much is a partnership between professionals and parents and other agencies that dip into the programme.*"

    (Early Years Service)

- **Mature stage of programme development.** Sure Start Mellow Valley, despite being in the last wave of eight programmes in Leeds, is mature for its relatively short life span. It is held in high esteem by many stakeholders,

including the Children's Society, and is regarded as a trusted yet ambitious programme that stretches itself to respond to local need:

"*I get the impression that it's advanced for its stage in the programme. For a relatively new programme it would appear quite advanced.*"

(Board member)

- **Careful and Strategic Consultation.** The development of the programme appeared to involve attention to consultation and partnership issues. Most of the core services delivered by Sure Start have arisen from a consultation process. There has been careful selection of Management Board members to make sure partnership links and parent involvement were strategic and maintained. For example, a strategic link was made with a local housing manager, following a partnership meeting, and led to the individual joining the management board. Significant changes have taken place from this partnership with many housing issues for young families beginning to be tackled.

- **Bureaucratic process of rules and regulations managed well**. The majority of stakeholders commented on the length of time and the negotiation processes, especially with the main accountable body, the Children's Society. However, there was perceived to be a clear lead throughout the process and also a good level of information exchange with regular reporting systems:

"*but development with regard to capital and resources, they have painstakingly made progress.*"

(Board member)

"*Sure Start meetings when they are over and done, everything feels clearer …no jargon or it's explained ….I've never been scared to ask questions, never felt stupid.*"

(Parent)

- **Career paths opened up for people from different backgrounds.** Mellow Valley has attracted a diversity of staff with a range of knowledge, experience and skills to develop the broad range of core services offered. This has influenced the development of the programme and the progress that has been made in areas such as childcare and family support work. However, issues surrounding professionals' roles and remit have been a challenge influencing the development of the programme and this will be discussed in the later section on partnership working.

"*Sure Start generally has opened up careers for people from different professions …..more possibilities now for development.*"

(Board member)

b) Recognised influencing factors

Sure Start Mellow Valley has experienced several influencing factors during its development. Five main factors have emerged from the data analysis:
- o The Sure Start programme comprising of three diverse geographical areas;
- o Viewed with suspicion as a new organisation;
- o Few service agreements with outside agencies;
- o Reliable parent involvement throughout the programme;
- o The need for outreach to transient populations and tackling social isolation.

In addition, some of the themes examined in the programme development section could also be seen as influencing factors.

One of the most significant influencing factors has been that Sure Start Mellow Valley comprises of three diverse geographical areas. It stretches a distance across two Primary Care Trusts, two Social Services and Housing ALMOs (Arms Length Management Organisations). This Sure Start has tried to work towards bringing the three areas together to be seen as a whole unit and one Sure Start, while also acknowledging their differences. This has not been an easy process with three very distinct areas having clear physical and community boundaries.

> "*I've been impressed with how the programme has managed to get it to hang together, such disparate areas Little London, Woodhouse .. then there is Meanwood up the road.*"
>
> (Social worker)

There was reported to be some initial suspicion amongst different agencies and community groups of Sure Start as a new organisation that had both government backing and financial support. On the whole the programme appears to have managed the process of change as a new organisation:

> "*There is further trust now. There was suspicion in the early days, amongst different agencies involved in Sure Start – but one or two characters put their necks on the line … and this works towards the aims and objectives of benefiting the community.*"
>
> (Board member)

One influencing factor is that there are few service agreements with outside agencies. The Management Board has made the decisions to provide services within Sure Start and has influenced the partnerships that have developed. For example, there are no major service delivery links with the voluntary sector, rather there are partnerships that have been strategically developed. Housing, for example, has been an important issue to acknowledge and address from the outset.

The whole area of parental involvement is discussed later in the report. It is useful to note that there has been reliable parent involvement throughout the programme and this parent involvement appears influential at many levels as the structures within Sure Start Mellow Valley enable parents to have a voice. Yet the parent representation seems reliable and avoids duplication.

The programme development has been influenced by the need to undertake outreach to transient populations and tackle social isolation. There appeared to be a tension between the time spent on delivering regular services and the time spent on outreach. This will be discussed further in Section 5 which examines challenges.

c) Ten early achievements and recognised outcomes

This Sure Start, as mentioned earlier, is mature for its stage of programme development given the relatively short time span it has been running and it has already achieved success in a number of areas. Analysis of the stakeholder interviews enabled the identification of ten key outcomes (see Figure 1). We have organised these early achievements, as it is useful to see both organisational outcomes and those outcomes that benefit young families. Clearly, the two groups of outcomes overlap with one another, for example, family support services as well as being a recognised organisational outcome will also benefit parents and families.

Outcomes for the Organisation:

- **Sure Start's increasing visibility and profile within the area**. This Sure Start appears to have reached a mature stage in the relatively short length of time it has been running. In particular, the programme has established good community links. Sure Start Mellow Valley's visibility and presence was recognised by a large number of the stakeholders interviewed:
  "*Most families with children under 4 know it's here and have heard of it and a high percentage have used the facilities.*"
  (Board member)

- **Family Support services established**. These services have focused on both parents and children's needs in all aspects of their lives. In particular Sure Start staff had worked with parents involved with social services. There have been benefits for those families not engaging with any statutory services. Sure Start has been able to provide family support in a helpful way:
  "*Some very good, skilled, experienced and creative staff doing that work* (family support)."
  (Sure Start staff)

- **A rapidly growing organisation**. A number of initiatives have been established in a short time from a rapidly growing small organisation. The extremely varied skill base, amongst the continually expanding Sure Start team, was acknowledged by some of the stakeholders interviewed and linked to provision of good quality services. In addition, Sure Start as well as developing core services, has focused on ways to involve more families from the different communities.

- **Four new premises across Mellow Valley and funding secured**. The new premises have been designed around families with children under 4. This has been a recognised outcome identified by many of the stakeholders who

commented on the difficulties of locating properties and the logistics and issues associated with funding these four capital building projects:

> "*In most Sure Starts you've got a defined geographical area and you've got a shiny new building in the middle of it and everyone is happy! This Sure Start has had to have four buildings the edge of Scott Hall, Quarry Mount, Little London building and the bungalow in Meanwood. It has had to attract more funding with four premises.*"
>
> (Board member)

Outcomes for families:

- **Social Isolation of families with children under 4 is beginning to be tackled.** Sure Start Mellow Valley provides a range of services for families from childcare and family support with 'time out' crèches for parents, drop in sessions, toddler groups, playgroups, play schemes during school holidays, Birthday parties, a clothes swap shop and various training courses for parents:
  > "*To me it's made a difference… it's been a way to meet people. There was nothing going on before Sure Start.*" (Parent)

- **Needs led and child centered.** Sure Start has made a unique contribution to families' lives, essentially addressing important issues for families with young children living in deprived inner city area, such as providing transport and laundry facilities. Sure Start Mellow Valley appears to be very driven by parents in the area and very responsive to their needs. The Sure Start team have developed trust by listening and being responsive to the needs of families with young children in a way that bureaucratic organisations may find difficult to do.
  > "*It's very different from what has ever been done before.*"
  > (Board member)

- **Ownership of the programme through involving a critical mass of parents**. It is evident that a large number of parents are fully involved with Sure Start Mellow Valley. Examples range from parents helping to interview prospective staff to the good attendance at groups and partnership meetings:
  > "*The involvement of the parents that allows them to develop their own skills … social skills, employment skills as well as to voice their opinions and views.*"
  > (Housing officer)

- **Parents' confidence and assertiveness developed.** Many stakeholders commented on this aspect. Furthermore, parents disclosed that their involvement in Sure Start and the parent training course had provided them with a unique opportunity and a level of involvement which had developed their confidence. One parent described how Sure Start supported her return to work:

    "*I would not have been brave enough without Sure Start to go out and get a job. I would have just stayed at home. The training has been very good.*"

    (Parent)

- **Job Opportunities in Sure Start created for parents.** Sure Start Mellow Valley has also provided parents with short term contracts to gain experience parent involvement workers:

    "*Local people in local jobs .. so it's not jobs for the boys, it's people recognising you may and should apply.*"   (Board member)

- **Shaped local services and linked young families into appropriate services**. Sure Start Mellow Valley appears to have worked hard in a flexible and friendly way with families to help connect families with relevant service providers. This has led to local services adapting their provision and becoming more responsive to the local needs of parents with young children:

    "*We are looking to change the job descriptions of the estate workers, working for the housing department. This has come about from the Parent Forum. In fact we are now delivering a fencing programme based around the needs of young children's safety.*"

    (Housing officer)

There is a danger that these ten outcomes, which have been achieved in the short term, could easily be lost by future changes with the development of Children's Centres. This perception was evident amongst many stakeholders and captured in the diagram below, which uses the analogy of the change ahead depicted as a rain cloud overshadowing Sure Start's achievements (see Figure 2). Stakeholders fear that this change may precipitate in core values, autonomy and flexibility being lost and result in Sure Start commanding a smaller sphere of influence.

Outcomes for families:

Social isolation of families being tackled

Needs led and child centred

Ownership by a critical mass of parents

Increased parents' confidence + assertiveness

Job opportunities created

Local services responsive to parents' needs + accessed by families

Organisational Outcomes:

Visibility and profile

Family Support services established

Rapidly growing organisation

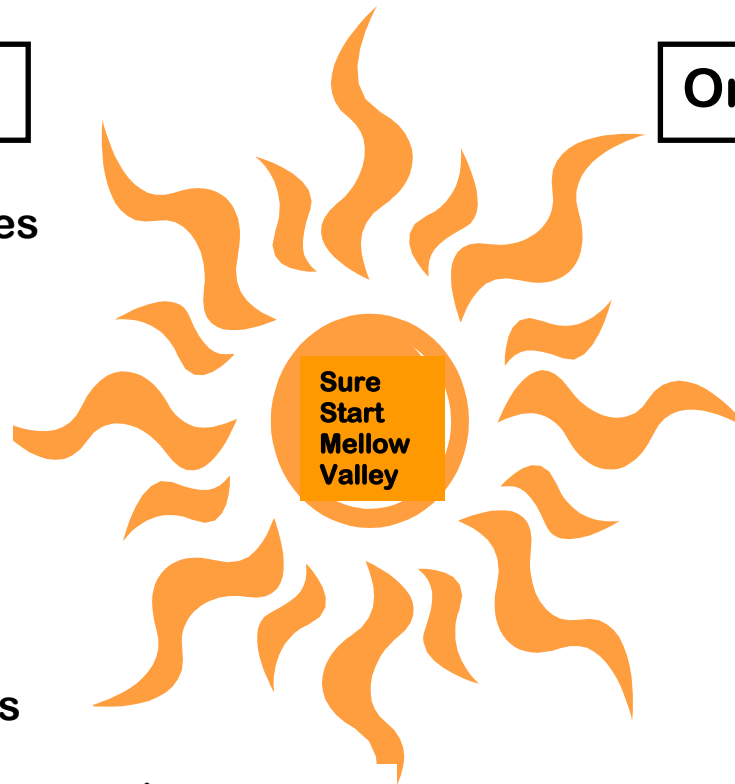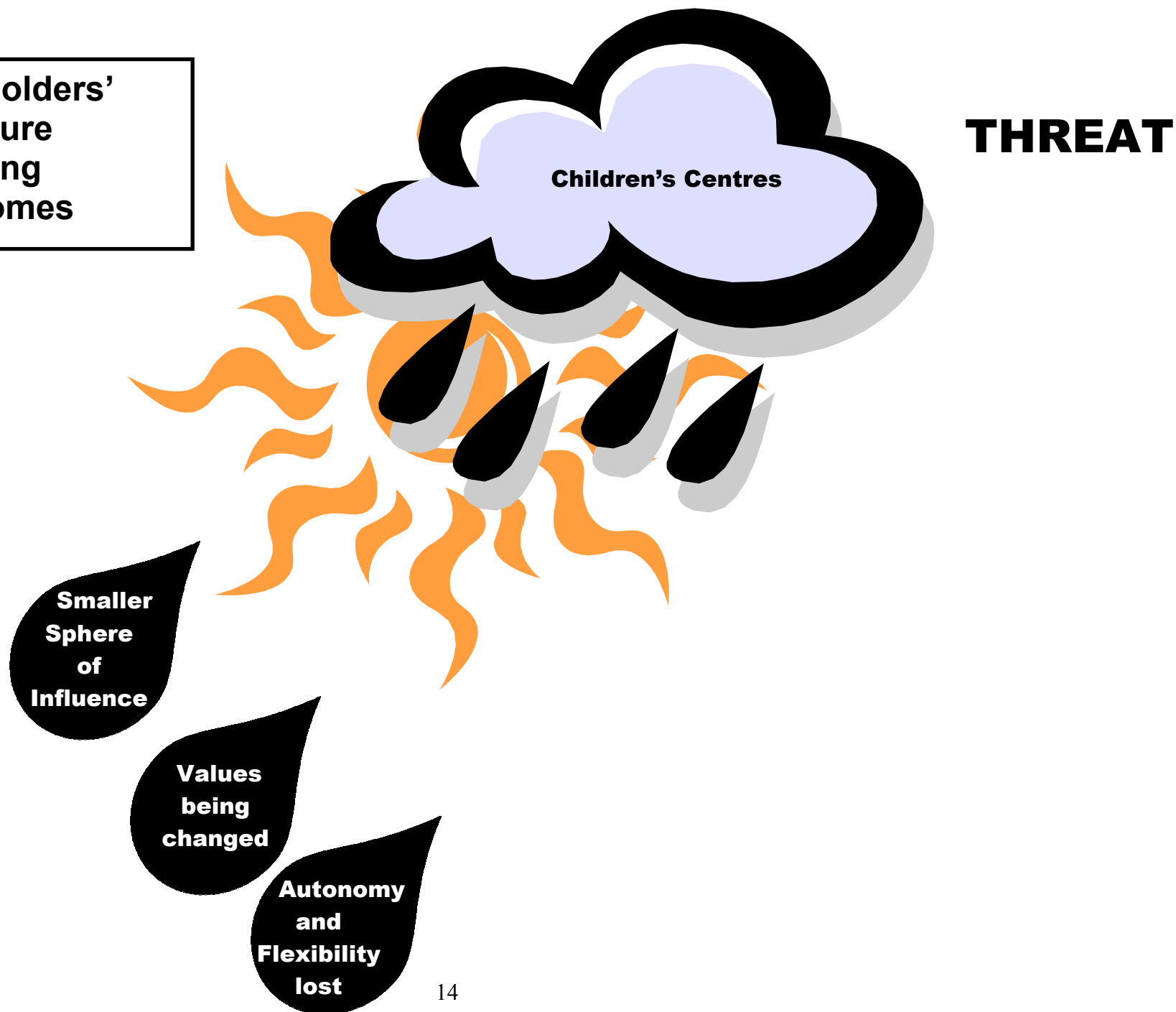4 capital building projects

Sure Start Mellow Valley

Figure 1: Ten Achievements of Sure Start Mellow Valley

FIGURE 2: Stakeholders' perceptions of future changes influencing Sure Start's outcomes

THREAT

Children's Centres

Smaller Sphere of Influence

Values being changed

Autonomy and Flexibility lost

14

Section 4: What are the goals and how will we get there? The mechanisms for achieving change

How Sure Start Mellow Valley achieves change is examined by looking at the range of approaches and methods used in the programme. This section starts by looking at the main goals as perceived by stakeholders and then goes on to examine three core elements of the programme:

- Approaches to service delivery
- Parental involvement
- Partnership working

a) Perception of Goals

This section briefly outlines the main goals of Sure Start Mellow Valley, as identified by stakeholders, which will provide the focus for achieving change in the future. It is important to note that there were differences in how stakeholders perceived goals and there was no real cohesive view of the goals despite some common themes emerging.

Box 2: GOALS – as seen by stakeholders

- **Reach and coverage –** ensuring all parents and children can access services and benefit from Sure Start. This will be discussed more fully in Section 5;

- **Maintaining and developing the sphere of influence** in parent and community involvement, childcare and family support work;

- **Children's Centres – acting as a key player in the delivery of the agenda.** Many of the stakeholders considered it was important for Sure Start to retain its sphere of influence and core values and take a strategic lead in the new agenda;

- **Four new premises up and running in the Sure Start area;**

- **Engaging more fully with health services –** in line with the delivery plan. Progress has been slow in relation to linking Sure Start's work with the health sector. However, a new post for a midwife working for Sure Start is hoped to make a significant difference;

- **Developing shared goals.** A few partnership stakeholders disclosed that they were unclear about Sure Start's actual goals. However, they were clear how they as a partner worked with Sure Start. The intention is to pursue joint training. This goal will be discussed more fully in the section on partnerships.

---

b) Approaches to service delivery

Sure Start Mellow Valley uses a combination of approaches in order to achieve change. Key approaches and methods were identified through the thematic analysis and validated at the staff meeting. These are discussed below.

Signposting and referring families onto services
Many stakeholders acknowledged how Sure Start has connected young families with appropriate services. For example, working with Housing and Early Years services, systems are now in place with new admissions to nurseries or new tenancies to explain the Sure Start programme and what is on offer. However, many of the systems, stakeholders suggest, are still 'work in progress'. Furthermore, work is currently being done with the school learning mentors in the area to identify families that would benefit from links with Mellow Valley Sure Start.

> "*People often have to go from one agency to another for services. Sure Start helps connect these up …… Sure Start starts at the point where parents start from, this is a different approach.*"
>
> (Social worker)

Flexibility in approach acting as a one-stop centre
Many stakeholders referred to Sure Start's flexible approach to responding to young families. This flexibility is also identified in the early achievements section in shaping services' responsiveness to young families' needs. There was perceived to be a holistic approach to Sure Start's work:

> "*looking at people's situations as a whole, pointing them in the direction of where they need to be for example housing services … or small things like filling out forms.*"
>
> (Board member)

However, in contrast Sure Start's flexible approach was met with some resistance by one stakeholder:

> "*I think Sure Start tries to be a friend to them all, but it's a fine line … people get complacent and don't value them.*"   (Health visitor)

Universal service availability
Several stakeholders commented on the Sure Start approach to provide services for all families in the area and not solely for families experiencing deprivation. In addition, a flexible approach has included families in need who live just outside the boundary of the Sure Start, in the Scott Hall area. Access to specialist Sure Start services is restricted to those within the postcode area, but Sure Start staff disclosed that nobody contacting Sure Start is excluded from accessing open groups and events. This seems to be a move away from the original objective which was to prioritise families only in disadvantaged areas.

> "*Funding can be directed to very specific families with lots of problems .. but it needs to be carefully shared.*"   (Parent)

> "*Each person and family have an expectation of a universal service, but also …….a level of service for people with a high level of need.*"
>   (Sure Start Management)

Advocacy

Advocacy was considered a key approach used by this Sure Start. Staff were involved in communicating needs and addressing problems for individual families:

> "*you can't decompartmentalise people's problems, (you) need to be an advocate. There is a willingness to put local people first, sometimes at the expense of local bodies. Loneliness is a problem, for some people like asylum seekers, Sure Start may be the first person they see not from the Home Office.*"
>   (Board member)

Relevant and innovative approaches attracting parents

Stakeholders, both professional and parents, highlight how Sure Start has attracted parents to attend groups by providing relevant sessions. In some of the communities within Mellow Valley, there is no culture of taking children to playgroups or attending antenatal groups which enable parents to be linked with services:

> "*I was talking to someone who asked what is there in Meanwood, and I told her about the Friday group … and she said wasn't there anything else we can do? Playgroups .. the culture round here is it's not the thing to do…. a lot of people don't go to antenatal around here.*"
>   (Parent)

Regular information exchange

There is the need to continually reinforce Sure Start's philosophy and the goals it is working towards. Information exchange between staff and parents is very regular with bi-monthly partnership meetings:

> "*staff realise how little this group of parents know about Sure Start's philosophy and targets and will spend some time going over this at the next meeting for their information.*"
>   (Sure Start staff)

c) Parental involvement

The Sure Start approach is based on parental involvement and recognises the important contribution that parents can make to local programmes. This section looks at in more depth the extent and level of parental involvement in Sure Start Mellow Valley and examines how involving parents helps the programme achieve its goals.

Reach and diversity

Local parents have been involved in the development of Sure Start Mellow Valley from the very beginning and continue to be central to the programme. Parents are actively recruited to Sure Start by programme staff, other partners and parents. Parents are drawn into activities and then have the option to participate at different levels of the programme. Parents who were interviewed had become involved initially either through being told by other professionals, through word of mouth or by seeing posters. The programme uses a variety of recruitment strategies to try to reach as many local parents as possible. Strategies include:

- developing links with other local organisations who then signpost people, for example, through parents' contact with housing services or health visitors;
- outreach to families which involves Sure Start staff working with individual parents;
- through networks and other groups or organisations;
- through more general publicity. Some systems are in place to inform new parents of Sure Start.

In addition, stakeholders felt that a key factor in recruitment was the friendly, welcoming atmosphere of Sure Start Mellow Valley. One parent attending 'Bumps and Babes' commented: "*they are all so loving and caring*".

The extent to which Sure Start Mellow Valley is able to reach out to and include all parents in the patch is seen as a major challenge for the programme and this is recognised by programme staff and also by some of the parents we interviewed. There was an acknowledgement that some specific groups of parents were less likely to be recruited or attend activities and involving these parents presented extra challenges for the programme. Groups identified by interviewees included:

- **Black and ethnic minority parents**. The Sure Start area covers a very ethnically diverse population and there are a number of languages spoken. It was reported that involvement of parents from minority ethnic groups was low in the early days but there have been some successes since. One example was the growing links with the Chinese community supported by an interpreter. This has now led to the involvement of a parent from the Chinese community on the Management Board. There was reported to be an ethnic mix at many of the activities. Involvement of

parents from minority ethnic groups is seen as being high on the agenda and there is a commitment to diversity from the board:

> "*This one (Sure Start) has a celebration of multi faith. They really do that really well and try to recognise the differences.*"
>
> (Board member)

Overall the involvement of parents from ethnic minorities is as a real challenge but Sure Start Mellow Valley is seen as making good attempts within limited resources. One professional also commented that there was a lack of involvement from some of the White families in Little London:

> "*The girls from aboard go, they are keen to access the services, keen to learn English but there are few 'Little London' girls……need to get into that group, the teenage mums etc., but it's very difficult to get in.*"
>
> (Health visitor)

- **Parents new to the area**. As the baseline survey confirmed, the Mellow Valley area includes some stable communities and also a transient population. A proportion of the parents will have recently moved and there can often be language and cultural barriers. A real attempt is made to recruit parents new to the area through networks and through agencies. There are issues though when parents are outside the system, and not known to any services.

- **Fathers.** There is limited involvement of fathers in the programme, as seen in other Sure Start programmes (Lloyd et al 2003). Dads are invited to events and activities and some fathers have gone on trips. There are also a small number of fathers who attend the Woodhouse Parent Forum. Overall involvement of fathers did not seem to be a priority issue. Some parents suggested that the culture was very much dominated by the mothers and this could be off putting for men:

  > "*They come to fun days but I think they get put off by all the women*"
  >
  > (Parent)

  One of the board members suggested that Sure Start could orientate more to families than mothers and a number of people identified the need for more male workers.

One further issue identified by parents was the problem of boundaries. Several reported that they were nervous of inviting other mothers in case they were not resident in the programme area. The strict use of postcode areas was a mystery and did not make sense to them.

Depth and quality of involvement

Parents once involved can participate at all levels in the programme. A strong theme was that parental involvement was core to the development of the programme and there was a continuing and genuine commitment to maintain that involvement. This was reported by all groups of stakeholders; parents, staff, board members and other professionals. A number of points were made. Stakeholders pointed out that the programme's existence was due to the efforts of a core group of parents who worked together with professionals to get the bid. This early involvement shaped the programme right from the planning stages through to delivery. Leadership was shown by those parents in taking the ideas forward. This core group of highly motivated parents has grown and more are now involved in planning and decision making. As the programme has developed, become quite organised and structured, and staff have been employed, there is still an attempt to keep a bottom up, flexible approach. One Sure Start staff member described it as a '*quality of openness'*.

Parents can and do become involved in the development and delivery of the programme through a number of mechanisms. There are parents involved through all levels of the programme's activities and functions. What appeared to be significant to many of those interviewed was that parents were able to move up through as they become skilled and more confident, from volunteering in activities to having a role on the Management Board. The individual benefits were evident:

> "*My involvement has given me a lot of confidence… it's a unique opportunity."* (Parent)

> "*The people who are involved, once they are over the difficulty of getting involved are empowered and definitely bene*fit."
>
> (Health visitor)

There are a number of formal structures for listening to parents and also informal approaches are used. Mechanisms identified by stakeholders included:

- **The Management Board**. The board is composed of half parents and half professionals and parents are fully involved in the decision making that takes place there. There seems to be no difficulty in recruitment to the board which is a positive sign. Most of the parent board members attended the Parent Forums which reinforced communication channels. Parents at one of the focus groups reported that there was a two way communication between the board and the parents; parents could raise issues and the information could be exchanged.

- **Parent Forums**. There are two regular Parent Forums, one for Little London and Woodhouse parents and one in Meanwood. Parent Forums were seen by parents as a way of getting their views across and they perceived that

they were listened to. There was some suggestion that not all parents felt able to voice their views, especially where they differed from the majority view. This was confirmed by a health visitor who spoke of parents not being able to raise issues satisfactorily and coming back to her. One parent commented that there was not always time to fully discuss issues as a lot of the time was spent on giving information. There had been some problems with turnover of parents and staff which had limited the depth of discussions and stopped them acting as an effective feedback mechanism. Overall, despite some difficulties, the Parent Forums were seen as relatively successful.

- **Partnership board.** Quarterly meetings are held to which all stakeholders are invited. These are primarily for exchange of information and networking. They are well attended by professionals and parents.

- **Employment of parents within the programme.** One mechanism for involvement was the employment of parents within the programme, so they become part of the delivery and implementation. Several interviewees saw this as very significant because it demonstrated that parents could grow in confidence and move into new roles within the programme.

As well as the structures, parents were involved through individual case work and through discussions at events and activities. The Sure Start parental involvement workers were seen as very skilled in meeting with parents and listening to different views and ideas which could then be fed back into the programme. One person described the staff as advocates for their parents. Parents often discussed things at events and general views were fed back. In addition, parents were involved in recruitment panels for the selection of staff.

It is useful when examining the extent and depth of parental involvement to categorise what happens in terms of the approach taken by the organisation. A Ladder of Participation can be used to show differing levels of participation. As can be seen in Table 3, there are different levels of involvement but, by and large, Sure Start Mellow Valley can be characterised by a partnership approach (Level 4). There has been an attempt to build and maintain a partnership between the parents, other professionals and the staff. The programme manager commented that '*on the whole there has been a wide consensus*'.

One crucial question is **how much influence do the parents really have?** Again a clear view emerges that parents do have influence in the programme, their views are listened to, and more importantly, they are largely acted on. All the parents we spoke to from board members, people at Parent Forums and those just attending activities felt involved in the programme. Individuals could give examples where they had been asked for opinions or where issues they had raised had been addressed. Parents have had a key role in shaping what Sure Start Mellow Valley is now, as these quotations illustrate:

"*Parents' voices are listened to, valued and acted on.*"   (Board member)

"*yes definitely, parents are listened to.*"   (Parent at Bumps and Babes)

"*I think they do (listen to parents). They don't do everything that's suggested, there are rules and regulations but they do listen.*"
(Long standing parent board member)

Table 3: Parental involvement approaches categorised using a Ladder of Participation (Wilcox 1994)

Level	Typical process	Organisation's stance.	Examples from Mellow Valley
Level 5 Supporting community initiatives	Capacity building	"we can help you achieve what you want within these guidelines"	
Level 4 Acting together	Partnership building	"we want to carry out joint decisions together"	Management board Parent Forums Employment of parents
Level 3 Decision making	Consensus building	"we want to develop options and decide actions together"	Parent involvement in recruitment panels
Level 2 Consultation	Communication and feedback	"here's our opinions – what do you think?"	Parent Forums Parent Involvement workers with individual families Partnership board
Level 1 Information giving	Presentation and promotion	"here's what we are going to do"	

The fact that parents are really central to the programme is key to the programme's success in working towards its goals. Understanding what parents' experiences and views are means that the programme has been able to respond to needs and deliver services that are actually valued and wanted:

"*We are responding to what parents said they wanted. Parents said that they needed more support generally …..the Family support team have tried to provide that.*"   (Sure Start staff)

As the programme has moved from planning stages to implementation, there has been a genuine attempt to maintain parental input. In other words, parental involvement has not been static but has evolved with the programme and allowed an element of flexibility and creativity as part of the approach to delivering services. Parents' suggestions appear to be taken seriously which leads to trust being built and parents feeling able and willing to take part again. There was a strong theme that parents had trust in the programme and certainly the baseline survey confirmed a high level of satisfaction with Sure Start. The following discussion illustrates how critical parent involvement is to successful delivery of the programme:

>Parent A: *If any issues come up you can speak to the Forum – or you can go and talk to the manager. If they didn't listen*…..
>Parent B: *People wouldn't come*.

d) Partnership working

This section of the report examines partnership working, the spread of links with other groups and how partnership working contributes to Sure Start goals.

Overall the evaluation found that stakeholders reported good partnership working taking place in the programme. Links were fostered and built through the involvement of board members from different organisations, through contact with local agencies and through networking and attendance at various local forums. There were very few service delivery links as Sure Start Mellow Valley delivers most of the local activities going on for families with children under 4. Some staff had dual roles and were seconded from other organisations to work in Sure Start.

The Management Board has a mix of statutory and voluntary sector representation (as well as parents) and selection of members was carefully thought out to try and involve a wide range of stakeholders and bring different skills to the board. There was reported to be a genuine commitment to collaborative working on the Management Board and the development of what one person described as a '*partnership ethos'*, despite the pull of other loyalties.

Links with local services and professionals

Wider than the board, good working relationships, not just exchanging information, were reported in most cases. There were strong links with housing, social services, and education. Sure Start works with two Primary Care Trusts and two Social Services offices. One theme to emerge was that Sure Start staff were seen as very approachable:

> *"I enjoy all the work I do with Sure Start. …..brilliant team, brilliant to work with, very welcoming and approachable."* (Board member)

There appeared to be some communication barriers with health professionals. One health visitor reported that she was not involved in Sure Start and despite referring parents had received no updates of the family's progress. However, other stakeholders acknowledged that a substantial amount of time and effort had gone into involving the health sector with this Sure Start programme.

A representative from Leeds Voice is on the board which gives a strong and strategic link to the voluntary sector. However, there appeared to be few strong links with local community and voluntary sector groups. One person commented:

> *"Sure Start have set up something on their own, but are linking with others in the community. I do think that there could be more development with the voluntary sector, they do really well with the statutory group but I am not that sure how much they do with the voluntary groups."*
>
> (Health visitor)

On the whole the findings showed that initial investment in partnership working has led to developing trust with several local organisations.

Partnership working can operate at different levels from exchange of information and dialogue between organisations through to integrated joint working. Partnership working in Mellow Valley is mainly focused on working alongside other organisations in a complementary fashion to achieve shared goals. The majority of professionals interviewed perceived that Sure Start Mellow Valley complemented the work of other agencies rather than substituted:

> *"There is overlap and we support each other."* (Head teacher)

> *"On the ground, delivering her expertise within the programme but also picking up the programme's expertise as well and being able to deliver the service more cohesively, holistically. We weren't duplicating services, we weren't jockeying for the same families."*
>
> (Board member)

The work and contribution of Sure Start was universally welcomed. Several interviewees commented that partnership working was worthwhile as it added some value to their work and they could see outcomes from it. The case study (over) illustrates how partnership working between Sure Start and a local organisation can lead to better outcomes for local parents.

Model of partnership working

Broadly speaking the model of partnership working in Mellow Valley is based on a model of coexistence with organisations rather than fully integrated sustainable partnerships. One person described it as a '*hub and spokes'* model with Sure Start Mellow Valley at the centre and links to different local organisations. This model was helping parents to access information and support from other organisations through Sure Start (as also illustrated in the case study):

> *"What they offer is useful. People often have to go from one agency to another for services. Sure Start helps to connect these up."*
>
> (Social worker)

Sure Start was also useful to those organisations/services as it gave them access to different groups of parents that they would not necessarily have had:

> "A*n important point is that Sure Start will often have a link with parents you wouldn't normally have any contact with.*"
>
> (Housing officer)

Sure Start was seen as particularly valuable as a resource because funding meant that it had time to spend with parents. One person was concerned that it had in effect created a two tier system, basic services and compared with the resource intensive Sure Start.

Boundaries

While the general view of partnership working was positive, there were issues over boundaries. Compared to parents, professionals found the postcode boundaries less baffling but some still felt that they were a problem. One professional spoke of how they knew of parents who would benefit but could not refer as they were just outside the area. While eligibility was an issue, there were also communication barriers due to differing organisational boundaries and the fact that the Mellow Valley area covered three localities meaning staff had to liaise with a lot of partners. On the whole there was an attempt to manage this situation and no major problems arose. The exception was the problem over data sharing between organisations which remain a significant issue. A number of those interviewed spoke of the need for better communication between professionals. It was suggested that Sure Start should actively increase efforts to consult with other professionals so they feel included. Two people suggested the development of a newsletter for professionals in the area sharing news about Sure Start.

Box 3: Case Study – working with housing

The lack of suitable and good quality housing is one of the most fundamental issues for many families with young children in the Sure Start Mellow Valley area. In recognition of the profound influence this issue can have on family life, staff from Sure Start and the Little London Area Housing Office meet regularly and work closely together to help local parents to resolve their housing problems. An important part of this partnership work includes regular fortnightly drop-in sessions held at Beulah Hall at which parents have the opportunity to meet with housing staff to discuss issues such as applications for choice-based lettings. In addition to this work, housing staff hold monthly "Walkabouts" in defined areas during which local people can draw attention to problems affecting their environment, such as the dumping of rubbish or inadequate lighting.

More joint working is planned for the future. Addressing the desperate need in the area for debt counselling, as well as providing help to parents in the often daunting but essential task of completing housing benefit forms, are viewed as issues of particular importance. Sure Start Mellow Valley and the Little London Area Housing Office have built an effective working partnership which has proved beneficial to the aims of both teams. The commitment and expertise of the housing staff coupled with the positive relationship which Sure Start has with local parents makes the partnership a strong base from which families can obtain the help they need.

"Working with Sure Start has been invaluable - we are both trying to achieve the same goal - to make it a nicer place to live - with the best use of resources and joint working… "

Section 5: What are the key challenges?

In this section the major challenges for Sure Start Mellow Valley, as identified by stakeholders, are discussed. While the move to Children's Centres is clearly dominating discussion about short and medium term development of the programme, there were other challenges identified which the programme will need to address. These are discussed in turn.

Children's Centres
The move to Children's Centres was seen by almost all stakeholders as the most significant challenge facing the programme. In part this is because there is a need to manage the transition from Sure Start Mellow Valley to two, possibly three, Children's Centres. This will involve some changes to service delivery and inevitably there is a focus on managing processes during the period of transition. The risk is that this leads to attention being deflected from the primary outcomes of the programme. A number of interviewees saw goals in terms of buildings and one person even spoke of there being a temporary 'halt' to the work.

The lack of clarity about funding and management is creating anxieties. Concerns were voiced in relation to two aspects. The first concern identified by many of the interviewees, including parents, is that future funding through Children's Centres would be spread thinly and that may restrict the full range of services and activities. Some saw this being linked to effectiveness, as currently Sure Start has the resources to provide quality care and support to parents. The second concern was related to the management of the Children's Centres and the fear that the local authority would adopt a 'top down' approach to services and not really listen to parents:

> *'"There is a worry that the council will take over and not work with the local community anymore if it is part of one grand plan rather than a local plan."'*
>
> (Sure Start staff member)

> "A*re these Children's Centre parent led or council (led)? Because the council don't know what parents want."*
>
> (Parent board member)

Programme reach
The problem of ensuring that Sure Start reaches all parents in the area and that services are accessible for everyone is a current and future challenge. Priority groups, such as parents from minority ethnic communities, have been identified and there has been some success but many stakeholders felt that there were still families not in contact with Sure Start. Inevitably those in most need may not be known to services in the area, be very isolated, or may experience barriers in accessing the services. Some of the parents interviewed, and some of the staff, saw this as one of the most significant challenges for Sure Start. The complex nature of the area, and the fact that many families are moving into the area,

including asylum seekers, presents an ongoing challenge. One board member identified the issue:

> *"For it to be accessible for the cross section of Mellow Valley's catchment areas. I know Little London area has 22 different languages spoken in the local school. There is ethnic diversity, the challenge is to reach all groups".*

The programme will need to continue to put resources into reaching out to everyone at the same time as supporting families in contact with Sure Start.

Sphere of influence

There is potential to extend the sphere of influence of Sure Start and develop new links. The community/ voluntary sector may offer one area where partnership working could be extended. As one person said this would '*give it a shelf life*' for Sure Start. There is also potential for forging links with the private sector and local businesses, as identified by another stakeholder. The core challenge for Sure Start is not so much about developing the links but how to influence those services and organisations to change practices to better support parents:

> *"I'd like to see it be a more influential group, that left a legacy improving care and facilities for children under 4. But it needs to be more integrated instead of isolation."*

(Health visitor)

Diversity in the team

Some of the stakeholders identified the need for the team to reflect the ethnic diversity of the community they serve and also move towards a better gender balance. There has been some attempt to address the lack of male workers but it has not been possible to fund a post. One board member commented:

> *"The current context is very female dominated…there's usually a guy at the top. But it is difficult for men to come in. Future appointments, they obviously need to be legal, but there is recognising the benefit of a male employee to encourage fathers."*

The challenge is maintaining and developing a broad range of skills and experience on the team at the same time as employing individual staff who can provide a bridge between different cultural groups and Sure Start. Working towards having more staff from ethnic minority groups, possibly drawn from local communities, would assist in dissemination of information about services across a range of cultural groups and languages.

Diversity in geographical area

There have been evident attempts, given the history of three localities, to develop a cohesive programme and to ensure equity between the areas. The challenge is to continue the momentum as four capital building projects are established. Boundary issues across the three localities will not be solved overnight and it will be important to address some of those issues in joint working.

Communication with professionals and services
The need to communicate with a large range of service providers and organisations on the patch continues to shape the programme. There are some excellent examples of partnership working where links have brought real benefits. Improving communication is key to working effectively with partners. All Sure Starts have experienced difficulties in accessing essential data to inform their programmes:

> "*We can't get information from health because of data protection that has held us back from day 1.*"
>
> (Sure Start staff member)

Systems to share data are being considered, particularly with health services. This issue needs to be resolved or it will act as a barrier to the development and delivery of services in Sure Start and later in Children's Centres.

Working with the family unit
The Sure Start approach lends itself to focus on the whole family rather than solely on the mother and young children. This is a move away from the traditional service boundaries viewing the mother as the main child care provider. The holistic approach, identified in the methods and approaches section, is able to address the needs within the family, including those of young fathers, grandparents and other siblings. Clearly Sure Start is unable to address everything but has a role in generating strong partnerships for the benefit of their families. Maintaining and developing a holistic approach will be important in the move to Children's Centres.

Leaving Sure Start
One key challenge for the programme and for its partners was raised by parents. There was concern about what would happen to them after their child reached school and they could no longer access Sure Start activities. There is a real sense in which some parents feel anxiety that there is nothing out there to support them and they will genuinely miss being involved as the discussion below illustrates:

> Parent A: *It is hard for parents with children over 4… it's very hard for parents who were involved at the beginning.*
> Interviewer: *Is this a general problem?*
> Parent B: *When they turn 4 what do they do*?
> Parent C: *Go back to square one*.
> Parent A: *Go back to being a couch potato*.

Sure Start's remit is children 0-4 years but the challenge for the programme is ensuring that parents do not move from a situation where they are supported to being left with nothing. This could undermine the confidence of parents in the programme but also limit the involvement of new parents.

Section 6: Conclusion

Clear findings emerged from the stakeholder survey and a number of points can be made in conclusion. Commenting on the progress made and the early impact on families, it is evident that Sure Start Mellow Valley moved rapidly to develop the programme and deliver core services. This can be seen as a genuine achievement. A study of Round 1 and 2 Sure Start programmes (Tunstall et al 2002) found that many managers reported it had taken longer than expected to implement their Sure Start programmes and to deliver a full range of services. This evaluation found that there is a clear vision, very good and strategic management, and a distinct and practical model underpinning activity in Sure Start Mellow Valley. The programme is held in high esteem by its stakeholders. What is even more significant is that some of the early work has led to organisational and family outcomes. The quality of services that are provided allows a universal approach to family access at the same time as supporting those families most in need. Reach is a continuing challenge for Mellow Valley, especially given the nature of the area, but it is high on the agenda. Overcoming barriers to accessing services and ensuring all families have information on Sure Start is an issue for all Sure Starts (Tunstall et al 2002).

An outstanding feature of Sure Start Mellow Valley is the depth and extent of parent involvement. Parental involvement has been there at the beginning and has been maintained as a core element of the programme. Parental involvement helps Sure Start Mellow Valley achieve outcomes as it means the programme delivers services that are wanted (as also indicated in the findings of the Baseline User Satisfaction Survey). This reinforces the trust parents have in Sure Start and the feeling that they are listened to. Parents are truly central to the programme of work. It can be noted that Sure Start Mellow Valley has not adopted a community development approach in its work with parents and other community based groups and therefore achieving outcomes is dependent on having well developed, quality Sure Start services and having strong links with partner organisations. Overall the evaluation findings suggest that a good balance has been achieved between delivering services with a core group of staff and maintaining the responsiveness and flexibility of the programme through parental involvement.

The model of partnership working is one of coexistence. Partner organisations and Sure Start Mellow Valley recognise each others contributions and draw on mutual resources. One person described it as working 'hand in hand' with other organisations. By and large the additional level of support offered by Sure Start is really welcomed by other local services. While Sure Start Mellow Valley has acted as a conduit for helping parents to access information and support offered by local providers, there are few examples of integrated services developing. There are questions as to whether improved support for parents is dependent on

Sure Start being there or whether changes are becoming embedded in professional practices. Health is an area acknowledged by many of the stakeholders as behind in the development of the work. Whilst recognising the barriers, progress is hopeful given the new appointments in the health team.

Overall the evaluation has found that this programme has a clear vision and uses effective approaches based on the key principles of Sure Start (see Introduction). Achieving longer term objectives and targets (see Box 4) will be dependent on Sure Start Mellow Valley tackling the challenges identified in this report. A number of recommendations can be made for consideration by the Management Board, staff and other partners.

Box 4: Sure Start Objectives

Objective 1: Improving social and emotional development
[supporting early bonding and supporting mothers with postnatal depression]

Objective 2: Improving health
[*supporting parents to promote healthy development, for example through encouraging breast feeding]*

Objective 3: Improving children's ability to learn
[increasing good quality play and learning opportunities and improving language skills]

Objective 4: Strengthening families and communities
[building community capacity and creating pathways out of poverty]

Recommendations for future work

These recommendations have been drawn from the stakeholder survey and take into account where Sure Start Mellow Valley has got to in terms of programme development and the fact that one of the drivers for this year is the move to Children's Centres. The recommendations are outlined below:

- In the midst of change, it is important to retain Sure Start values, the quality of services (childcare and family support work) and the core model, as this has already led to positive outcomes.

- Parent involvement is embedded in this programme and this needs to be taken forward into the Children's Centres. The depth and quality of the parent involvement has been a critical element in the success of the programme to date. The trust parents have in the programme needs to be cherished and anchored into the new Children's Centres.

- Given the context of the local area and the barriers to reaching all parents, especially those not known to statutory services, it is recommended that the Management Board lead the process of developing practical strategies to address the issue of reach. Whilst recognising the enormity of this challenge, prioritising initiatives would breakdown this work into manageable projects over set periods of time. This process could be informed by good practice from other Sure Starts and from the voluntary sector.

- The coexistence partnership model has served the programme well. The programme needs to consider their legacy in developing more family orientated practices in other services and how this may be achieved. There is a real risk identified by stakeholders that some of the good work may be lost in the future. Whilst a corporate sense of the goals amongst all the stakeholders has yet to be built, more joint staff training, such as the joint work between housing and Sure Start, could be considered.

- Dissemination of Sure Start practice to reach the professional community as well as the good practice that already is evident in the publicity to parents.

Recommendations for future research

The evaluation will continue to gather evidence on the progress of the programme. It is also important that there is a strategic dissemination of the results of the stakeholder survey, particularly in view of the move to Children's Centres. The Centre for Health Promotion Research could work collaboratively with the board and management team to disseminate results.

Staff and other stakeholders have suggested a number of areas that may merit more in depth research over the following year:

- Comparative evaluation of outreach to parents and family support with vulnerable groups

- In-depth case studies of parents engaging in different aspects of the programme

- Factors influencing the accessing of core services, including childcare.

- Research exploring reach to fathers and male involvement in the programme.

- Evaluation of the parent training courses offered by Sure Start Mellow Valley.

REFERENCES

Fulbright-Andersen, K. Kubisch, A. and Connell, J. (1998) *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives. Vol2: Theory, measurement and analysis.* Washington DC, The Aspen Institute.

Lloyd, N., O'Brien, M and Lewis, C (2003) *Fathers in Sure Start local programmes. National evaluation summary.* Nottingham, DfES Publications.

Tunstill, J., Allnock, D., Meadows, P. and McLeod, A (2002). *Early experiences of implementing Sure Start. A summary of findings*. Nottingham, DfES Publications.

Sure start (2005) The Sure Start principles [internet] Available from: < http://www.surestart.gov.uk/aboutsurestart/thesurestartprinciples2/> (Accessed 1/3/05) London, Department for Education and Skills and Department for Work and Pensions.

WHO (1998) *Health Promotion Evaluation: Recommendations for policy makers*. WHO European working group in Health Promotion Evaluation, WHO, Copenhagen.

Wilcox, D. (1994) *The guide to effective participation*. Brighton, Partnership Books.

Stakeholder interview schedule

General

1. What involvement do you have with Sure Start?

2. What makes this Sure Start different from other activities you do?

Meeting the needs of families with children under 4

3. How do you see Sure Start working in this area to meet the needs of families with children under 4?
    - In what ways has Sure Start changed since its early days?
    - How have these changes made a difference?

4. Are there any other comments about the development of the programme since it began?
    - What activities have worked well since the beginning?
    - What methods are not working? Why do you think this is?

5. What influences have there been on the development of the programme?

6. What has been achieved and learnt during the development of this Sure Start?
    - What success stories have happened during the life of your Sure Start?
    - What do you see are the goals for this Sure Start?
    - What do you see needs to be in place to reach these goals?

Involvement of parents

7. How do parents living in this area get involved with Sure Start?
    - How are dads involved?
    - How are parents who are new to the area involved?

8. In what ways does Sure Start help to give parents with children under 4 'a voice' in their local area?
    - If not, why not?
    - How have parents' roles developed within the Sure Start team?

Involvement of other outside agencies and partnership working

9. How do you see this Sure Start complementing the work of other agencies in this area?
- How have links been developed?
- How is your work influenced by the parents forum or vice versa
- What are the main challenges Sure Start/you have experienced in relation to partnership working?
- How could partnership working with other agencies in this area be improved?

10. How does the work of Sure Start combine with and complement your work/ work of your organisation?

General concluding questions

11. Overall what are the big challenges facing your Sure Start?
- What you think could be done differently?
- What do you see Sure Start changing into?
- What are the benefits of these changes?
- What are the limitations of these changes?

12. Any other comments you wish to make?

Sure Start Mellow Valley – Parent Focus Group

Considering the whole Sure Start programme and how it helps parents and children

How has Sure Start MV made a difference to families and children in this area?
- Examples
- What was life like before SS?

Are there any successes that can be highlighted?

Can you think of anything that is not so good or that you would change?

What has influenced the way the programme has developed and works?
- About the area, outside the area?

Introduce Time plan and think about how the programme is developing

Where is Sure Start now……..What do you think Sure Start wants to achieve in the long term? (its goals)

What needs to be in place to make that happen – for the programme to be successful?

Involving parents
How successful is Sure Start in involving parents?
- Dads / parents new to area?

In what ways does Sure Start give parents the opportunity to give their views and ideas?

Do you feel that parents' ideas are listened to and acted upon?

What did you expect to gain from being involved with the Parents forum?
- Have your expectations been met?
- Do you feel able to give your views? Do you feel that what you say has an influence?