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Building Firm Foundations

Sure Start Mellow Valley

Evaluation Report 2005 / 2006

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Centre for Health Promotion Research

July 2006



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Section 1: Introduction

Section 1: Introduction

What is Sure Start?

Sure Start is a government programme which aims to make a difference to children aged 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 Starts are changing with the government's commitment to build Children's Centres in every community by 2010.

The Sure Start Mellow Valley programme and team

Sure Start Mellow Valley is a 6th wave programme. It was approved in April 2003 and is now entering its fourth year. The Children's Society is the lead partner and accountable body. Sure Start Mellow Valley has attracted a diversity of staff with a range of knowledge, experience and skills. For a full list of current staff, please see Appendix 1.

The following Core Principles (developed in partnership with local parents) are applied throughout the work of Sure Start Mellow Valley:

- The programme will be child-centred in approach.
- Parents/carers and professionals will aim to work together in partnership from pre-conception onwards.
- Communities will be encouraged to use and to develop the Sure Start programme.
- The programme will provide friendly flexible provision to meet the diverse needs of parents, carers and Sure Start aged children in the area.
- The programme will offer home from home services where all families are welcome and services are immediately available.
- The programme will use and develop existing community services and skills.

The team of staff is currently led by an acting programme manager. The previous programme manager was in post from February 2003 until August 2005. The programme is overseen by a **Management Board** comprising approximately half local parents and carers and half professionals from key agencies in the voluntary and statutory sector. Management Board meetings are held once a month.

In addition, all stakeholders are invited to quarterly **Partnership Board** meetings. These are primarily for exchanging information and networking. The Sure Start approach is based on parental involvement and recognises the important contribution that parents can make to the programme. Local parents have been involved in the development of Sure Start Mellow Valley from the very beginning and were closely involved in forums and groups lobbying for their area to have a Sure Start programme. Parents continue to be central to the programme and there is a strong commitment to ensuring that parents and carers have a voice and remain at the heart of the programme. One way in which the programme seeks the views of parents is through six weekly **Parent Forums**, held separately in both Little London and Woodhouse and in Meanwood. These Forums are open to local parents and carers and provide a space in which local issues relating to childcare, education and play can be discussed.

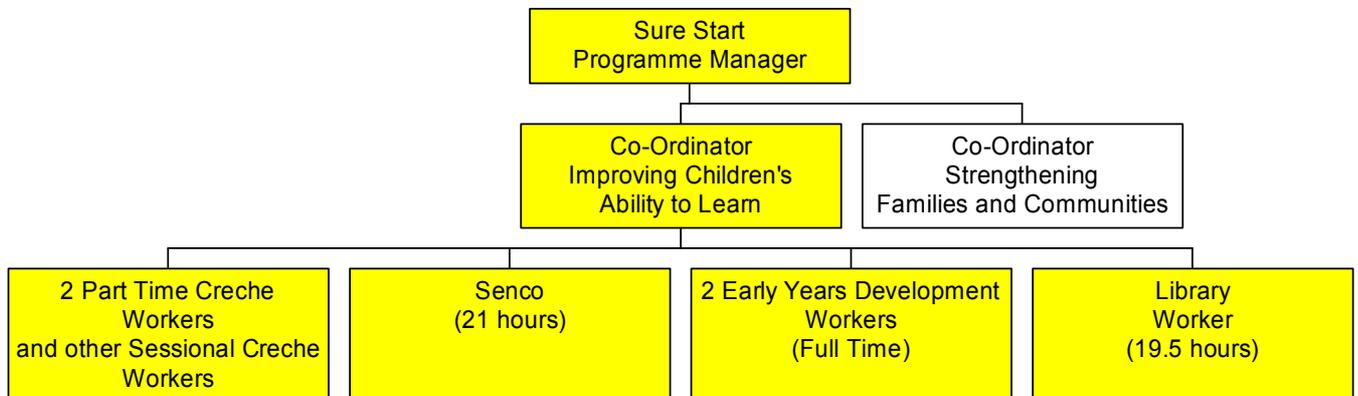
Sure Start Mellow Valley has established links with many other local agencies and initiatives that work to improve the lives of families and children aged 0-4 years. (A list of partners is provided in Appendix 2). A principal aim of working alongside other agencies is to build capacity in the long term.

The programme has established a wide range of activities and services which will be discussed in Section 3. A description of the groups is provided in Appendix 3 and more information can be found in the Database in Appendix 4.

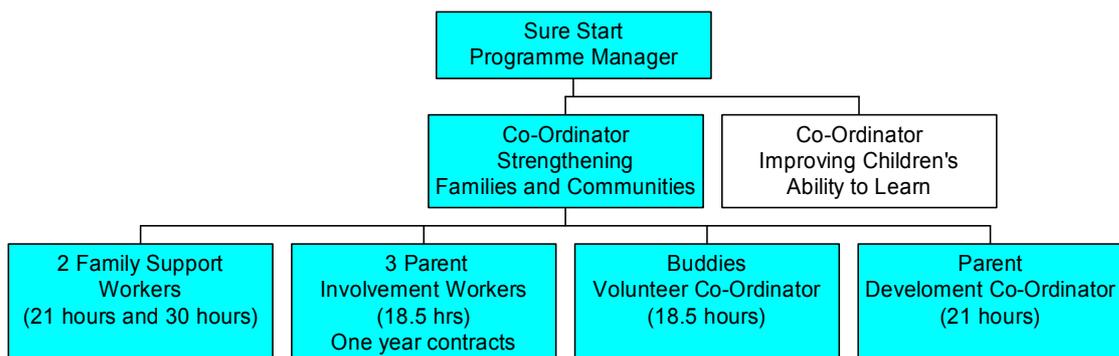
The Sure Start Team is currently managing the programme's transition to Children's Centres. The work of the programme will be incorporated within four Children's Centres: Carr Manor and Scott Hall in Meanwood, Quarry Mount (Woodhouse) and Little London. In June 2006, the programme moved from their long-established headquarters at Beulah Hall to a new principal base within Little London Children's Centre. The Sure Start Bungalow located next to Miles Hill Primary School opened in April 2005 and will continue to be the central base for Sure Start activities in the Meanwood area. The programme will also be accommodated within the Quarry Mount Children's Centre and this will be its principal site within the Woodhouse area.

The programme consists of the following three core teams, supported by an administration team. (NB: *The Improving Children's Ability to Learn Team is also known as the Play and Learning Team and is referred to as such throughout this report*).

Improving Children's Ability to Learn Team



Strengthening Families and Communities Team



Health Team



The staff teams have changed in structure over the past year. The above structures represent those workers in post for the majority of the financial year 2005-2006. Additional staff were recruited at the beginning of 2006 following funding received from ERDF (European Regional Development Fund). These staff are particularly focused on creating pathways to employment. They are: Childminding Development Worker, an additional Volunteer Co-ordinator, an additional Parent Development Worker and an Information Worker. The Health team has also been restructured to take into account changing needs. The Health Promotion Specialist has been replaced with a Health and Family Support Worker.

About the Mellow Valley area

Sure Start Mellow Valley covers two non-adjacent areas: Little London and Woodhouse and part of Meanwood. The Little London and Woodhouse areas are located in the heart of the city of Leeds. Meanwood is an inner area just to the north of the city centre. (For a map of the Sure Start Mellow Valley area please see Appendix 5).

The Sure Start Mellow Valley area is ethnically diverse. The population includes many overseas students and people who have recently moved into the area, particularly in Little London and Woodhouse. The Mellow Valley area is characterised by both stable communities and more transient populations (including a large number of refugee and asylum seeking families). Table 1 below shows a summarised breakdown of ethnic groups in the area from the Census 2001¹.

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 %
Chinese or other ethnic group	6 %	1 %

According to recent figures provided by Leeds Health Informatics (based on postcodes) there were 637 children aged under 4 years living in the Sure Start Mellow Valley area as at January 2004.

The Mellow Valley area is served by two Primary Care Trusts (North East and North West), two Parliamentary constituencies (Council Wedges) (Leeds North West and Leeds North East) and two Social Service departments.

The Sure Start Mellow Valley area is characterised by high levels of deprivation. For example, according to the National Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 (IMD), the University Ward (which covered most of the Little London and Woodhouse areas prior to ward boundary changes in April 2004) was the 7th most deprived ward in Leeds (out of 33). In England as a whole, the University ward was ranked as the 666th most deprived ward (out of 8414). In terms of the Child Poverty Index, the University ward was the most deprived in the city (and 129th out of 8414 nationally). The City and Holbeck ward which also covered some of the Little London and Woodhouse area was ranked as the most deprived ward in Leeds (378th out of 8414 nationally) and the 5th most deprived ward in Leeds in terms of the Child Poverty Index (363rd out of 8414 nationally).

Deprivation levels in Meanwood tend to be masked by the area being situated in the generally more prosperous wards of Chapel Allerton and Weetwood (*Ward names were not changed in 2004*). However, the IMD 2000 statistics show that the Chapel Allerton ward was still the 8th most deprived ward in Leeds (out of 33) and ranked 962 out of 8414 nationally. With regard to the Child Poverty Index, the Chapel

¹ Census 2001 data refers to Little London and Woodhouse Sure Start area and Meanwood Sure Start area.

Allerton ward was the 8th most deprived ward in Leeds (and 618th out of 8414 nationally).

The Year 3 annual report

This report forms the Year 3 annual report. Alongside documenting findings from Year 2 evaluation activities, this report also brings together findings from previous evaluation activities and gives wider consideration to the overall progress and outcomes of the programme so far. **Section two** explains the evaluation approach that has been adopted and details the activities that have been conducted and the methods used. **Section 3** highlights the key themes and findings to emerge from the workshops undertaken with the Sure Start teams and provides a summary of the in-depth evaluation conducted of the Family Support Team. **Section 4** is entitled 'Pulling it all together' and considers the work and achievements of Sure Start Mellow Valley with particular regard to the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. A conclusion and brief summary of findings is found in **Section 5** followed by a range of further information within the **Section 6** Appendices.

Section 2: Evaluating Sure Start Mellow Valley

Section 2: Evaluating Sure Start Mellow Valley

'Evaluation at a local level is an essential tool for maintaining and raising the quality of services and for planning new developments. It needs to be planned from the very start and implemented as an integral part of the programme' (NESS 2002:1)

The Centre for Health Promotion Research was asked to undertake the local evaluation of Sure Start Mellow Valley in May 2004, a year after the programme was approved. We hope that our evaluation will add value to Sure Start Mellow Valley through celebrating achievements and capturing learning. This section sets out how we have approached the evaluation and what we have done.

The overall aim of the evaluation has been to provide robust evidence both to help Sure Start Mellow Valley assess progress towards goals and also to promote learning which can in turn inform development of programme activities. National guidance indicates that local evaluations should deal with questions: 'What are we doing and how well are we doing it?' (NESS 2002:2). Throughout the evaluation, we have tried to adopt an inclusive and collaborative approach to working with families, the Sure Start board, programme managers, staff and other stakeholders.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation of Sure Start Mellow Valley is based on an evaluation approach which:

- takes account of the local context;
- identifies the methods used by the programme and how these lead to change;
- tries to understand what happens because of the work (outcomes);
- uses evidence to assess progress towards goals;
- allows key points of learning to emerge.

In other words, we have tried to look not only at what works but why it works². Where it has been appropriate, we have sought to involve Sure Start staff and parents in design, data collection and analysis. A range of sources of evidence have been drawn on and different research methods have been used. Where multiple methods reflect similar findings, this strengthens the evidence presented. Evaluation activities have been planned in conjunction with Sure Start management and the management board for both year 1 and 2 of the evaluation (see Table 2). The first piece of data collection was a Baseline User Satisfaction Survey (2004) which looked at the views of 120 parents on local services and facilities for families. A Stakeholder Survey followed in 2005. This involved interviews and focus groups with a range of different people involved in Sure Start Mellow Valley, including parents, board members, partner organisations and staff. Findings from both these pieces of work are presented in reports (Newell et al, 2004; South et al, 2005). Summaries of some of the key issues are highlighted in Section 4 of this report.

² 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: Evaluation activities carried out by the Centre for Health Promotion Research

	What?	Why?	How?	Who?
Year 1 2004/5				
Baseline User Satisfaction Survey	A community survey of local parents	To find out parents' views on local services and facilities for families with young children	Questionnaire designed together with a group of parent researchers	120 parents completed a questionnaire
Stakeholder survey	Interviewing a range of different stakeholders	To find out how Sure Start Mellow Valley is meeting the needs of families To find out how parents are involved	Small focus groups with parent board members at Parent Forums Interviews with board members and professionals Staff meeting	45 individuals took part including 15 parents
Year 2 2005/6				
Evaluation of Family Support Team (FST)	Case study of the work of the FST	To find out about the work of the team and what it offers families and other professionals	Staff Diaries Analyses of case records Interviews with parents and professionals (conducted by Evaluation team)	FST involved in evaluation Interviews with 5 parents and 10 professionals
Evaluating with Sure Start teams - Health - Play and Learning - Strengthening Families and Communities - Admin	Teams involved in self evaluation of work and successes	To gather relevant evidence on core activities and outcomes	Workshops and Focus Groups with the Sure Start teams. Interview with Library Area Service Manager (conducted by Evaluation team) Questionnaires and telephone survey (conducted by SS staff) (for more info, see Appendices 6, 7, 8).	Teams involved in data collection Library Area Service Manager Parents

In **Year 2**, the impending move to Children's Centres and the need for good quality evidence to support continuation of Sure Start activities led to the decision to undertake two core evaluation activities:

- an in depth evaluation of the work of the Family Support Team;

- working with the other Sure Start teams (Health; Play and Learning; Strengthening Families and Communities, Admin) to audit the range of current activities and identify evidence of effectiveness.

National reporting requirements have meant that the findings from these pieces of work and other evidence are presented together in this Year 3 annual report.

The **evaluation of the Family Support Team** was an in depth examination of the work of the team. We looked at the work of the FST from a number of different angles and sought the views of the team members, parents and also professionals from external organisations. Different research methods were used to try to get a rounded picture of what the team does, how it works with other organisations and what it offers the families it works with. The evaluation team worked closely with members of the FST during the evaluation. The full findings from this evaluation are presented in a separate report (South and Newell, 2006) and a summary of the main points are included in Section 3.

Audit of evidence from Sure Start Mellow Valley teams

During 2005/6, the Centre for Health Promotion Research worked with the following four teams to draw up evaluation plans and to collect evidence of success.

- Health
- Play and Learning
- Strengthening Families and Communities (excluding those involved in the Family Support Team evaluation)
- Admin

The objectives were:

- To work with the different teams to assist them in gathering relevant evidence on key activities and projects and identifying outcomes;
- To synthesise and present evidence from different sources which highlights the impact and value of the work undertaken by Sure Start Mellow Valley.

To do this we held a series of workshops with the teams. The key questions that the evaluation team wished the staff to consider and reflect upon are outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: Sure Start Mellow Valley : Key questions

1. What is the context for the work?
2. Has the team been successful (against its objectives)? What evidence have you collected?
3. What has worked well? Why?
4. What hasn't worked well? Why?
5. Have parents and other stakeholders been involved and participated?
6. Has there been effective partnership working?
7. Were there any unexpected outcomes?
8. What lessons have been learnt?

At the initial workshops staff were encouraged to talk about the activities they were involved in and their approach. They were asked to identify outcomes and evidence of success. Any gaps in data were identified and strategies agreed to collect evidence from different sources. Follow up workshops were then held for staff to present evidence and agree findings. Staff were asked to reflect on different aspects of their work (within a focus group format) and tape recordings and notes were taken. We then worked to summarise evidence, identify key issues (using thematic analysis) and to present results in an accessible and appropriate way using a common format. This evidence is presented in the next section.

This approach is clearly based on the perspective of the different teams, and involves a process of self reflection and assessment. However it also involved staff in gathering data from activities and getting feedback from parents and from other partners. Questionnaires were distributed to parents attending groups and staff also conducted a telephone survey with parents with regard to the Home Safety Equipment Scheme. In addition, a member of the evaluation team conducted an interview with the Library Area Service Manager. Findings from all these data collection activities are also backed up by evidence from other pieces of evaluation work.

Section 3:

Evaluation with the Core Teams:

- **Health**
- **Play and Learning**
- **Strengthening Families and Communities**
- **Admin**

Key findings from the Family Support Team

Section 3: Evaluation with the Core Teams

A: The Health Team

This section describes the nature and process of the Health Team, using evidence taken from the workshops and focus group with staff. Further information about activities can be found in the database in Appendix 4.

a) Description of team

The Health Team consists of:

- Midwife (Seconded through NHS Trust) (32 hours)
- Health Nursery Nurse (Seconded through the PCT) (37 hours)
- Health and Family Support Worker (35 hours)



The Health Team is a very 'young' team currently in the early stages of development. The Health Nursery Nurse came into post in March 2005, the Midwife in May 2005, and the Health and Family Support Worker recently joined the team in April 2006.

b) What do they do?



A principal role of the Health Team is to **provide health information to parents** on a variety of topics with the aim of empowering and supporting them to make informed choices relating to maintaining and improving the health of their family. Health information and advice is provided both within groups and on a one-to-one basis, including home visits. The team signpost or refer families to other agencies where appropriate.

The team also **provide health information to Sure Start colleagues** in order to support them in their work with families. This includes in-house training relating to health issues.

Through their work, the team are aiming to meet both the **Sure Start Health targets** and the **five outcomes central to Every Child Matters**.

Health Team – what do they do?

- Regular groups for children and parents (*some of which are run with the Play & Learning Team*).

Activities and services with specific health purpose including:

- Bosom Buddies breastfeeding group
- Antenatal support
- Joint clinic in partnership with midwives and health visitors at Woodhouse Health Centre
- Weaning talks
- Parenting groups
- Home Safety Equipment Scheme
- Home visits

**See Appendix 3 for a list and description of groups*

“Spotlight” on Breastfeeding and Midwife support

A principal aim of the Health Team is to increase local breastfeeding rates. Support is currently given through a **Bosom Buddies breastfeeding group** held in partnership with health visitors and midwives at Woodhouse Health Centre. A baby morning has been set up at which Sure Start Health visitors and midwives work alongside each other providing services to parents, including baby clinic, breastfeeding support and midwife drop-in clinic. Future plans for breastfeeding support include the establishment of **two Baby Cafés** – firstly at Little London Children’s Centre and later at Quarry Mount Children’s Centre in Woodhouse.

Five local mothers have recently undergone a 7-week training programme (provided by Sure Start Mellow Valley in partnership with Sure Start Chapeltown) to become **breastfeeding peer supporters** – “Bosom Buddies”. It is planned that these volunteers will give support both within groups and on a one-to-one basis.

Additional support from the Health Team midwife is provided as required, including on a one-to-one basis within the home, often through joint visits with a health visitor. The midwife attempts to make links with all pregnant women in the Sure Start area to ensure that they have access to the support that they need. The midwife is developing information packs to provide information on issues that regularly emerge through her work.

c) Who do they work with?



The team have built (and continue to build) effective **working partnerships with a range of relevant agencies**, principally with other health teams and professionals (especially health visitors and midwives) and with Nurseries (Quarry Mount, Blenheim and Scott Hall Early Years Centre).

The team place great importance on **giving parents a voice**, and ensuring that parents feel welcome to make suggestions. Parents are continuously consulted and asked for their views and suggestions. While they do not always give feedback as much as the team would like, it was believed that parents do feel increasing ownership of the groups. When parents do give their views, the team seeks to respond to them and adapt their work accordingly where appropriate.

The team regularly liaises and works with other **Sure Start colleagues** with regard to issues concerning families. Some of the groups are run jointly with the Play and Learning Team. There are strong links between the Health Team and the Family Support Team and joint visits are sometimes made to families who need more intensive support. A principal role of the recently appointed Health and Family Support worker is to link the work of the Health Team and the Family Support Team and to support the FST in increasing their links with local health services.

d) How do they work?



Working in partnership - The team link in and work with other health teams and relevant agencies with the aim of creating a holistic health service. Partnership working has included joint running of groups and making joint visits to families. Families are increasingly being referred to the team and encouraged to get involved with Sure Start.

Increasing access to health information - A principal aim of the groups is to provide parents with an informal and welcoming environment in which to access health advice and information. While importance is attached to providing opportunities to have fun and to socialise, all groups have a wider purpose and structure and each activity is planned for a reason.

Engaging and building relationships with families - Through the groups, the team aims to engage with families (often from before a child's birth!) and to build good relationships which will keep them involved with Sure Start. Groups have been an effective vehicle for picking up on family problems and delivering support.

Tailoring support to the needs of families - The team adopt a flexible approach and aim to deliver support in a way in which parents feel most comfortable. The team have been involved with helping families with a range of issues.

e) What difference do they make to families?

Health Team – summary of evidence

Core Activity	Goals	Main Outcomes	Evidence
Home Safety Equipment Scheme	To reduce accidents and A&E admissions	Equipment installed and used Parents report increased confidence in home safety Families have greater awareness of accident prevention	Monitoring data 65 families ordered safety gates or fire guards. 94 gates and 17 guards were given out. 51 families had them fitted by the Sure Start joiner, 9 families fitted them themselves, 5 are currently waiting for fitting Phone interviews with 24 parents – majority reported increased confidence and that they valued the service
Bosom Buddies Breastfeeding Support Group. Training of 5 Bosom Buddies Peer Supporters	To increase breastfeeding rates and the length of time mothers breastfeed (6 months min to a year)	6 parents accessed the group between Sept 2005 and May 2006 (when held at Craven Road) Increase in support for breastfeeding mothers Women in the community have the skills to support each other with breastfeeding	Monitoring data of contact with Bosom Buddies peer supporters

Group Work and the provision of health information.	To empower and support parents to make informed choices relating to maintaining and improving the health of their family	Parents have increased awareness of health issues and feel more confident and able to make informed choices Parents report making changes in behaviour following health information /support received	Monitoring data Evaluation questionnaire Staff observation and parent feedback
Weaning talks	To increase the number of babies being successfully weaned	12 weaning talks have been held since July 2005. 50 parents have attended Midwife has developed a 'tool' to conduct future talks	Monitoring data Positive feedback from health visitors on the number of mothers attending

The Health Team is still in the early stages of their work and evidence of achieving outcomes is not yet available for all their activities. However, the evaluation suggests that what they have achieved has been of value to parents and this has been evidenced through questionnaires and interviews, and via feedback provided to the team. While it may be difficult to prove that the team have made a difference to health, it is important to consider early outcomes such as increased reported awareness of health issues.

f) What has the team learnt?



Team learning has been reflected in a number of ways. The team recognise the importance of being flexible and innovative in their approach to delivering health information and support, and being prepared to change aspects of their work that are not working. A key example has been the merging of two groups with low attendance to form a more successful group – Friday Friends. The importance of consulting with parents to gain suggestions was highlighted.

A principal reason for the success of groups has been the consistency and skill mixture of staff coupled with parents having the opportunity to access support and information in an informal, non-threatening setting. The team believe that parents feel comfortable to ask advice and have also noted the scope of groups to enable parent to parent support and information sharing.

The potential for the work of the team to lighten the load of other health professionals is demonstrated through the weaning talks. Conducting these talks has also provided the team with the 'tools' to carry out further such work in the future.

Working in partnership with other agencies has helped to improve provision for local families. The team recognises the importance of building relationships with other professionals and raising awareness of the role of the Health Team. It was felt that having a specific Health Team within the programme has helped to highlight to local health professionals the relevance and necessity of making efforts to work with the

Sure Start programme rather than viewing it as something separate from and unconnected to their own work.

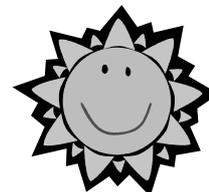
The team noted the difficulty in measuring effectiveness due to fragmented collection of data by mainstream services, for example relating to breastfeeding, smoking and A&E admissions. They are currently collaborating with health visitors and the PCT regarding collection of statistics and it is hoped that this will improve systems for a streamlined data collection and information sharing. The midwife has also begun to register breastfeeding status when registering new births in the area.

Key points of learning from the Health Team

- Keep communication channels open
- Continue to build relationships and raise awareness of the team
- Maintain a consistent team
- Listen to and consult with parents
- Adopt flexible ways of working to best suit the needs of parents
- Recognise when groups and services are not working and adapt provision to make positive changes

The team have a lot of ideas for future joint work, including postnatal clinics, antenatal classes and the production of basic leaflets on health issues such as potty training and weaning. While most of the planned activities are linked to Sure Start targets, they are keen to provide other services if specifically highlighted by parents, for example yoga / exercise activity.

g) Key points for future practice



- ✓ Providing a positive, welcoming and non-threatening environment for families to access health information is essential.
- ✓ Placing the needs of the family at the centre of their work - being responsive to these needs and tailoring work accordingly.
- ✓ Promoting health and increasing sustainability through establishing positive links and effective working relationships with other key professionals.

B: Play and Learning Team

This section describes the nature and process of the Play and Learning Team, using evidence taken from the workshops and focus group with staff. Further information about activities can be found in the database in Appendix 4.

a) Description of team

The Play and Learning Team (also known as the Improving Children's Ability to Learn Team) are a core team within Sure Start Mellow Valley. The team currently has the following core members of staff:

- Co-ordinator – oversees work of team providing quality play and learning experiences
- Two Early Years Development workers - working directly with families and organise activities
- Library worker (19.5 hours) – promoting use of libraries
- Two childcare workers – working in crèches and other activities



They also draw on and manage a pool of sessional workers and work alongside college students. The social inclusion (SENCO) worker is also part of the team but her work was included within the evaluation of the FST.

b) What do they do?



Much of the work of the Play and Learning Team is focused on supporting and delivering play sessions, include running regular groups for children and parents, such as Friday Friends.

The Play and Learning Team are OFSTED registered and manage time out crèches which support a range of Sure Start activities, for example allowing parents to attend board meetings and training courses. The team have a crucial role in identifying children with developmental delay and speech and language problems.

The team include a Librarian, funded through Leeds City Council, who works closely with the local library service to promote reading activities.

Play and Learning Team – what do they do?

- Regular groups for children and parents (some of which are run with the Health Team).*
- Mini Movers – a specialised music and movement programme for children 6 months to 4 years
- Time out crèches
- Support to community-run groups for children and parents
- Providing fun days in the holidays
- Play In The Home scheme – working one-to-one with parents and children in the home
- Library work – encouraging reading and use of local libraries
- Setting up toy libraries in Little London and Meanwood.
- Training of play workers

*See Appendix 3 for a list and description of groups

c) Who do they work with?



The team have built effective working partnerships with a broad cross section of agencies including **health services, Early Years, local schools, the Youth Service** and also **local churches**. They link with other agencies in order to support families and signpost parents to relevant services. There has been strong partnership working with the **Library Service** and this has involved input into planning, provision and delivery of local library services.

The team regularly **consult with parents** and listen to their concerns. A principal method for consultation is 'Talk Time' when parents and professionals come together to ask questions and discuss what they want from the programme. Comments books and evaluation forms are also used.

The team works closely with other Sure Start colleagues. They may be involved working together with the **Family Support Team** where families have a need for intensive support. In those cases the Play and Learning Team will focus on the child and look at the play aspects and development.

The team also train and employ **sessional workers**. These are recruited from the local community and from the two universities.

The team have a role working alongside and in partnership with other **community based groups for young children**.

d) How do they work?



Encouraging and supporting play with young children - The team work is focused on facilitating and providing quality play and learning experiences of all children in a range of settings.

A child centred approach - always aiming to consider issues from the child's perspective. However in line with the ethos of Sure Start, they also aim to consider the needs of the whole family.

Accessibility - The team attempt to provide an environment that is welcoming and relaxed, thereby enabling parents to seek advice and express concerns. They endeavour to make people feel included and promote cultural awareness. Sure Start groups are often the first point of access for parents.

Using groups to promote learning - Groups provide activities for children that are both stimulating and enjoyable. The team's approach is to use regular groups as a vehicle for achieving longer term goals. Groups are also an important way of raising awareness with parents and disseminating information. The team conduct informal talks, for example about the equipment loan scheme.

Providing individual support where needed - One-to-one play sessions are used with families when parents need extra input. Again providing play in the home can be a useful tool to access families and find out needs and problems in a non-threatening way. If necessary, the Family Support Team can be involved.

Flexible approach - The team have different professional backgrounds and draw on their range of experience to work together to plan their programme and activities.

They regard their enthusiasm for the work and the flexible approach adopted as key strengths of their work. Different team activities are linked. The team describe how they work to create a 'smooth blend' of services so parents and children can easily transfer from one group to another.

Outreach work - Outreach work is carried out in areas where families are hard-to-reach. One example is in the Scott Hall Road area, where the team was involved in meeting with local parents and knocking on doors to ask opinions.

Sharing good practice - The team seek to share good practice with partner groups. Support and advice for community based groups can be provided, including direct involvement in the provision, adopting an advisory role or providing training. Sessional workers are given an induction to Sure Start followed by on the job training and supervision. This approach aims to help child care workers gain good experience and develop skills, whilst at the same time ensuring high standards are maintained.

e) What difference do they make to families?



Overall there is some good evidence that the Play and Learning Team are achieving short and medium term outcomes. There has been a consistent attempt to record participation in activities and to get parental feedback.

Some case studies and session/event evaluations have been undertaken.

There is an awareness in the team that play activities are used as a vehicle for engaging children and parents and working on wider goals in terms of improving health and learning.

There is particularly strong evidence of success with the library work. Work with the local library services has produced clear outcomes in terms of changes to service provision and more parents using libraries. Evidence from the Sure Start team was confirmed by an interview with a local librarian who stressed the mutual benefits of working in close partnership.

Play and Learning Team – summary of evidence

Core Activity	Goals	Main Outcomes	Evidence
Organised play groups	Improving social and emotional development. Improving the ability to learn Parents involved in supporting child's learning.	Children gaining confidence and essential skills Parents at ease in groups and able to raise concerns/learn about play Children with additional support needs identified	Observation by staff Good levels of attendance recorded. Course evaluations from 3 groups Referrals to other SS teams/external agencies. Case studies
Mini Movers	Improving social and emotional development	Children have improved body awareness and skills in balancing, decision making, singing etc.	Photo documentation Personal scrapbooks showing child's abilities and skills completed by parents

Library work	More children reading Improving the ability to learn	More parents aware of and accessing local library services Improved, more family friendly library services	Bookstart scheme – monitoring Survey of library use with Sure Start parents Weekly mobile library service started in Meanwood Interview with local library manager – reported changes in library service
Support to community groups	Strengthening families and communities	Increased range of types of good quality play and learning opportunities in the community	Example of a group where support by Sure Start has enabled a group to move to being run by volunteers.

f) What has the team learnt?



The Play and Learning Team had a strong rationale for activities and their approach. They described constantly striving to inform people that what they did was not ‘just play’ but a vehicle for family support and promotion of learning. They expressed strong views that the programme was still very young and activities were still being established. There are benefits to parents in terms of having continuity of staff leading to firm relationships and the growth of trust.

One point of good practice was the flexibility to change aspects that are not working, for example where a group had low attendance, changing provision so that it became successful. The team make efforts to consult with parents to gain feedback on why some services/groups are not as successful and gain suggestions for improvement. One team member described: ‘*constant consultation shapes services – parents shape services*’.

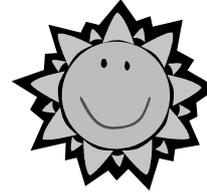
Key points of learning from the Play and Learning Team

- Keep communication going
 - Take a slow and steady approach. Things take a lot of work – never give up
 - Build relationships and let people know what the team does
 - Listen to and consult with parents
 - Be informative but not pushy. Drip feed information and ideas
 - Adopt flexible ways of working that best suit needs of parents
 - Adopt an enabling approach that does not encourage dependence
-

The Play and Learning Team were able to identify a number of challenges to their work. Lack of time was a principal factor limiting the work, with members of the team on part time contracts and the lack of sessional child care workers. This situation affected the progress of the team and meant good ideas were often put on hold. Waiting for the completion of buildings was also a challenge but it was noted that the Bungalow, at Miles Hill, Meanwood was well used.

Another challenge has been the geographical spread of the programme and the diverse needs in different areas, however, the team felt that they have been able to rise to this challenge.

g) Key points for future practice



- ✓ Play work is used successfully as a mechanism for accessing and engaging with parents and children on all different levels. Needs can be identified and appropriate information and support to be directed to families.
- ✓ Both individual and group play work can provide a context for learning. Children and parents can develop valuable skills and confidence.
- ✓ A flexible approach, responsive to parents' views, means services/groups can match needs.
- ✓ The Play and Learning Team have an important and distinct role in building capacity for good quality play and learning experiences through their work with local services and groups.

C: The Strengthening Families and Communities Team

This section describes the nature and process of the Strengthening Families and Communities Team, using evidence taken from the workshops and focus group with staff. Further information about activities can be found in the database in Appendix 4.

a) Description of team

The Strengthening Families and Communities Team consists of:

- Joint team manager (job-share)
- 3 Parent Involvement workers whose role it is to reach families, (especially where there might be language or access difficulties) and promote Sure Start services
- 2 Volunteer co-ordinators who recruit volunteers, review opportunities for volunteering, pathways to employment and encourage professionals to see volunteers/parents as a resource to the programme.



b) What do they do?



The main role of the Strengthening Families Team is to work alongside families and other professionals to build confidence and skills. The supportive nature of the Strengthening Families Team means that their work spans across the whole of Sure Start Mellow Valley's activities. **Offer advice and support to parents** through 'Outreach', 'Home Visits' and 'Buddying'. **Work with families alongside other professionals** to build their capacity and skills, ensure continuity with families and ensure long-term sustainability of services.

Encourage parents to become involved in the work of Sure Start Mellow Valley through volunteering and/or pathways to employment (i.e. 'buddying', mini-bus driving, breast feeding support, credit union).

Use 'fun' activities or events which have personal meaning to families as a basis for getting parents involved in Sure Start Mellow Valley services (such as Birthday Parties, Christmas, Eid or Chinese New Year parties). Encourage parents to become involved in 'governing' or overseeing the activities of SSMV through parent involvement forums and volunteering.

Strengthening Families Team

- Advice and support to parents
- Outreach
- Home visits
- Buddying
- Work with families alongside other professionals
- Involve parents in delivering services through volunteering (i.e. breast feeding support/ credit union)
- Involve parents in 'overseeing' programme
- Pathways to employment

c) Who do they work with?



Much of the work of the Strengthening Families and Communities Team cuts across many professional boundaries. Not only do the team work with parents with young families, but they also work alongside professionals from across the multi-disciplinary team to build their confidence and skills to work in a more inclusive way. Here are a few examples of their work:

“Hidden work”

“[We’ve] worked with a Kurdish family and they’ve needed a lot of support on different aspects but they’re not actually ‘coming into the programme’ as yet. A lot of work is being done – ‘hidden work’, involving sorting out birth certificates, law centres, fuel etc. The first time the team got involved, this family had been cut off. Here, the team have been involved in mediating for the family...”

“We accompany some families to activities – walk with them, so that they get used to the route and introduce them to the activity. It’s trying to forge that link between the family and the programme if people are having difficulty coming under their own steam – and hopefully the family will eventually be able to come on their own...”

Source: Focus group with staff

d) How do they work?



Reflections on the team approach show that the Strengthening Families and Communities Team engage with families to achieve several outcomes. This was about **ensuring that services were available to all**. Being aware of the social, economic and cultural needs of families such as transport or language barriers. Staff commented; “It’s important that people can access the programme. For some families that are hard to reach, or for whom English is not their first language, that’s when we need to use interpreters...when families haven’t actually been ready to come in, we’ve stayed in contact and gently we try to nudge them to come and get involved with the programme”. Another commented: “for example, some of the Little London families, we’ve found it’s a bit too far for them to come – I think the mini-bus was used much more in the first year.”

Parents are always consulted about their needs and adjustments are made to the programme when things aren’t working: “The feedback we got from parents was that meetings were too large and there were staff just giving them information...since then we’ve tried to have one or two meetings to find out what parents wanted and they actually wanted to discuss things that mattered to them...” The team were able to respond directly to parents’ needs by listening to concerns and monitoring progress: “there have been lots of changes; initially it was just a buddies scheme but we have changed the idea of buddying to include lots of other activities – for example working in groups because some people aren’t ready to work straight away in a family.” Reflections on the process show that the team used an empowerment approach, **encouraging parents to become actively involved in decision making** about the programme and its activities even when this proved difficult: “It’s been hard to strike a balance – Sure Start is about listening to people, about how parents are experiencing the services [so] there has to be some sort of Sure Start agenda to

the forums, but we try to organise and facilitate it in a way that doesn't feel imposing and this can be quite hard."

The team were encouraged to reflect as part of their work and as such, evaluation training workshops were provided by Leeds Met. Parents and professionals were all encouraged to develop their own evaluation plans highlighting what they were hoping to achieve from their work and how they might gather the evidence (i.e. numbers attending, financial records etc).

e) What difference do they make to families?

Goals	Main Outcomes	Evidence
To advertise services to families	<p>People learn about Sure Start Services and access services</p> <p>Joint work with other professionals i.e. family outreach workers, Early Years staff, Children's Centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring data such as the numbers of families attending activities Protocols or service level agreements between SSMV and other agencies
To help people avoid debt (Positive saving)	<p>Regular saving by families and children</p> <p>Children have a positive attitude towards money</p> <p>Links are made to the Children's Centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at Credit Union Increase in children's accounts SSMV staff work alongside staff from the Children's Centre to run the money collection point
Promoting volunteering with Sure Start Mellow Valley	<p>Parents apply to become volunteers</p> <p>Workers identify activities for volunteers to become involved with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer records (numbers applying, completing training) Staff viewing parents as a resource

f) What has the team learnt?



The team reflected positively on the success of using parties as a means of engaging with parents. One parent involvement worker reported up to 30-40 families attending: "Sometimes it's the parents' first opportunity to come to anything. They get invited to a party and then they come along and we give them further information."

The recruitment of volunteers was also extremely successful with 16 enquiries and 14 actually going on to train as volunteers. Staff commented: "The process we have taken them through to get them to the stage where they feel ready to volunteer...the time taken to get those volunteers through the training and the time I [volunteer co-ordinator] have spent with them individually has been really positive."

Working in partnership also worked well, providing parents and professionals with the opportunity to work alongside one another: “We’ve got parents that we work alongside that are volunteers – [they] have helped with initial home visits to other parents.”

Finally, the process of reflective working allowed staff to be responsive to change things that weren’t working: “For a while, setting up the rota for the home visiting was a big headache...we’ve abandoned that now...so we’ve tried things, seen what works and we’ve evaluated throughout the year and modified accordingly.” Staff were able to reflect on what was not working and change an activity to accommodate it.

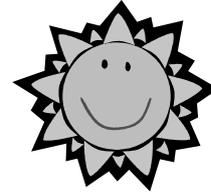
Key points of learning from the Strengthening Families and Communities Team

- Listen to parents’ needs and adjust the programme to meet them
- Use fun activities to engage parents based on what interests them
- Constantly reflect on what’s working and change course if its not working
- Provide intensive support and training for volunteers
- Find out volunteering opportunities beforehand
- It is possible to offer volunteering opportunities at a wide range of levels and offer a continuum of volunteering opportunities as confidence and skill level improves

The Strengthening Families and Communities Team was able to identify a number of challenges to their work. Short-term funding was a major barrier to sustainable working with parents who required time to build both an awareness of their needs as well as gain their trust. Parent involvement workers were only funded for 1 year fixed term, causing problems with recruitment and retention. Valuable time was lost each time a new worker started, whilst they familiarised themselves with the nature of the programme and assessed what was required: “In the last year the team have tried to build up their knowledge of the area and of the community. I’m not sure whether that will be continued with the next post holders but that has been the pattern this year...” Problems were also caused when staff left the post at the end of their one year fixed term period, taking valuable information about the programme with them as well as irreplaceable links to families with whom they had been involved.

Staff also reflected that they had struggled to get parents to attend the Parent Forum, despite changing the structure of the meeting. One team member commented: “It’s the Parent Forum we’ve struggled to get parents to attend – to have a regular core of attendees, so we’ve tried lots of things”. The team tried holding meetings less frequently, splitting the meeting agenda to half Sure Start business and half outside speakers (area wardens, housing officers). They also tried leafleting around school and playgrounds and talking to people on streets, but to no avail.

g) Key points for future practice



- ✓ Fun activities (such as parties and celebrations) provide an invaluable way of engaging parents in a meaningful way. Needs can be identified and parents can be linked into activities they may not have otherwise accessed.
- ✓ Adopting a dynamic approach, involving the active consultation of parents, provides an opportunity to offer services that are intimately tailored to parents' needs.
- ✓ Training parents to work as volunteers (although labour intensive) provides extra staffing capacity for the programme, useful input to the programme and builds parents' capacity for engaging in paid employment.
- ✓ The Strengthening Families and Communities Team have an important role in building capacity for other professionals working with families, building their skills and confidence to work in a wider, more inclusive way.

D: The Admin Team

This section describes the nature and process of the Admin team, using evidence taken from the workshops and focus group with staff.

Description of the team



Sure Start Mellow Valley is supported by an administration team which consists of an admin manager, an admin office assistant (part time) and a sessional finance worker. The programme has plans to recruit an additional part time admin office assistant and an information worker. The admin manager has been involved with Sure Start Mellow Valley since the outset and has an in-depth knowledge of the programme.

The role of the team



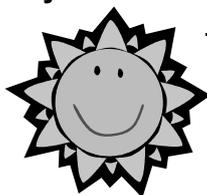
The role of the admin team is varied. Alongside the usual tasks associated with administrative work (such as conducting general correspondence) it is clear that the team provide a wider function within the programme. As well as providing support to the work of the three core teams, the team play a key role in building good relationships with both parents and partner professionals.

While the admin team spoke of not strictly working in partnership with others, they did realise the key role that they played in maintaining and facilitating partnerships established by the programme. They reported being an important point of contact and a key source of knowledge and information.

The team's contribution to partnership work can also be seen through other activities which they undertake. Important examples include supporting external organisations and agencies with activities involving young families and their advertising and promoting of services such as the Credit Union and Leeds Housing Services.

With regard to the future, the team have had a key role in building sustainability for Children's Centres through the planning and sharing of ideas.

Key activities - What has worked well?



Producing publicity to advertise Sure Start activities and services is a principal part of the team's role and most of the programme's publicity is produced in-house. The team produce a quarterly newsletter and this was highlighted as being a particular success, receiving positive feedback from parents and professionals.

The admin team are often the first people that families meet when entering the Sure Start building at Beulah Hall. The team feel that they have been fundamental in developing positive relationships with parents and creating a friendly and welcoming environment as well as providing the required information.

The contribution of the sessional finance officer was felt to work well, helping the programme to make the most of its money and ensuring that finances are in order and that audit inspections are always passed.

The admin team has a core role in supporting the management board. This has included organising meetings and venues, doing paperwork, taking minutes and arranging other events such as relevant training. The team also play an important role in supporting parents to attend meetings through organising crèches and providing them with information.

Sure Start trips have been successful and have proved popular among families. The admin team play a principal role in organising these trips, including advertising, registering families, organising transport and booking venues.

With regard to the programme as a whole, the admin team believed that it has worked well with parents, and that parental input has been central. They spoke of parents being regularly consulted and of the programme listening to and responding to their views. They felt that parents have been involved in decision making and highlighted their involvement in the design of local Children's Centres as an example.

The team believe that their presence as an admin team has been a key factor in the success of the Sure Start base at Beulah Hall. They feel that admin support is also needed at the Bungalow and hope that this may be provided when further staff are recruited.

Key activities - What hasn't worked so well?



The team highlighted difficulties in accurately maintaining the e-start database. The principal difficulty reported was the irregular way in which some colleagues submitted information. As well as contributing to incomplete database records, this was felt to have also caused tension when the admin team have repeatedly needed to make requests for the information. Despite these problems and the team's fears that inaccuracies still remain, they felt that the hard work put into maintaining the database has made it a more reliable and useful tool for the programme.

The team highlighted lack of time and often heavy workloads as causing problems and pressures in their job. They felt that this would be helped through the programme recruiting more admin staff.

E: The Family Support Team – Key Findings

The Family Support Team (FST) has been part of the programme since 2004. An in-depth look at the work of the FST formed the first core evaluation activity in Year 2. The full findings have been reported separately (South & Newell 2006).

The team includes a manager and two family support workers, working together with the social inclusion (SENCO) worker. The FST (with the SENCO worker) aim to offer intensive support to families with complex health and social needs and those experiencing a one-off problem or crisis. Families are referred from local professionals, other Sure Start staff and through parents asking for help themselves.

Evaluation methods

Four different research methods were used in an attempt to gain a complete picture of what the team does, how it works with other agencies and what it offers to families:

- Analysis of diaries kept over a two week period by FST members and the social inclusion worker.
- Analysis of 30 family case records (anonymised).
- Interviews with 5 parents who had received support from the FST.
- Interviews with 10 professionals from a range of agencies who work alongside the FST.

Key findings

What does the FST do?

The team work with families with a range of different problems and issues, including:

- Mental health
- Family conflict and relationships
- Domestic violence
- Child protection
- Child development and behaviour
- Financial concerns including debt management
- Isolation
- Help to access services
- Housing
- Asylum
- Parenting support

Families with a number of different problems are supported by the team. While the team work with some families for only a short time, others need more intensive help over many months.

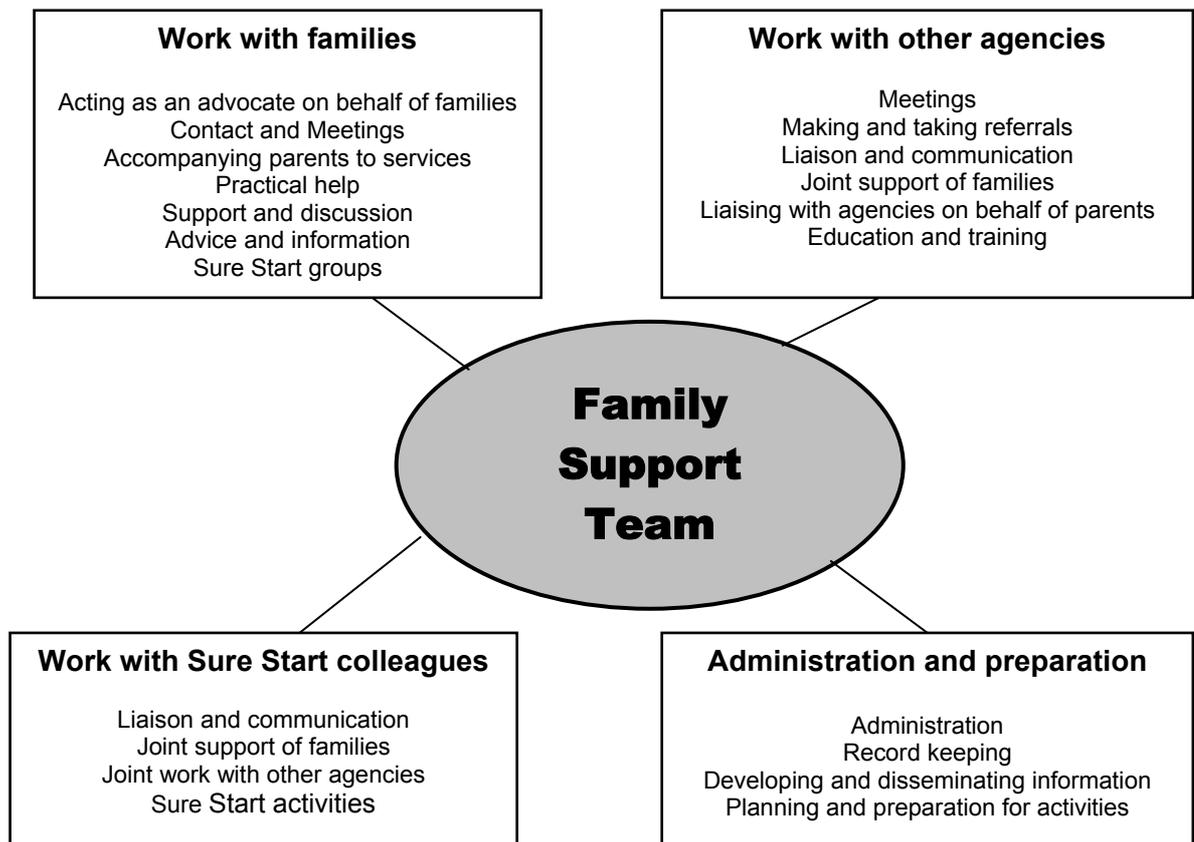
The team works flexibly and gives support in different ways in order to best meet the needs of the family. Their role includes:

- Contacting and getting help from other agencies on parents' behalf;
- Signposting families to other agencies and helping them to make contact for themselves;
- Accompanying parents to meetings and appointments;
- Listening to the concerns of parents and providing information and advice;

- Doing practical jobs such as washing or helping a family to move home or decorate.

As well as working alongside colleagues within Sure Start, the FST works with a large range of other agencies, including health, social services, housing, education and voluntary groups.

Figure 1: Core activities of the Family Support Team



What do parents and professionals think?

Parents said that they had been helped in a variety of ways. They valued the support that they had received and felt that this had made a positive difference to their lives. Overall, professionals also spoke positively about working with the team and the ways in which the FST benefits families and the wider community.

Key aspects of the FST's work highlighted by parents and professionals included:

- The team acting as a bridge and link between parents and other agencies;
- The flexibility of the team and their ability to respond quickly, to spend more time with families and to help with a wider range of tasks in comparison to other agencies;
- Families having regular contact with the team and knowing that they have somebody to turn to;
- The building of good relationships and trust with parents and the ability of the team to provide continuity of support. These were seen to help the team

identify the needs of families and assist in the prevention and tackling of problems.

In addition, professionals believed that the FST was 'filling a gap' and providing a service that other agencies were not able to. The team was viewed as an invaluable source of help to which professionals can turn for support and advice and to which they are able to refer families.

Box 2: Identified benefits

Parents

- Positive difference to parents' and children's lives
- Able to meet needs
- Practical support
- Getting help from other services
- Overcoming loneliness
- Accompanying to meetings
- A seamless approach

Professionals

- Bridge between local families and agencies
- Having a resource for support and advice
- A local, accessible team
- Positive relationships with families
- Able to identify problems
- Parents with increased confidence

In summary, the evaluation found evidence that the FST is making an important contribution to helping families in need of support. The team provide a unique service that is not being offered by other statutory services. They are seen to work in ways that are effective. Both parents and other professionals spoke highly of the team and expressed hopes that its work will continue.

Section 4: Pulling it all together

Section 4: Pulling it all together



A range of evidence has been gathered from across the programme, including the Baseline User Satisfaction Survey (BUSS), Stakeholder Survey, Parents' Questionnaires, Telephone Survey of users of the Home Safety Equipment Scheme and the Evaluation of the Family Support Team. In addition, staff teams took part in a series of workshops during which they provided evidence of their achievements and considered how evaluation could be built into

their work. Throughout the programme, teams were encouraged to reflect on their work as well as consider different ways of gathering data. This section of the report attempts to draw some general conclusions from all of the evidence above.

What is the programme doing?

Sure Start Mellow Valley provides a range of social, educational activities which contribute to the well-being of families and young children. The provision of regular groups such as Bumps & Babes, Mini-movers, Stay & Play, Friday Friends not only offer parents the opportunity to socialise with other parents, they also allow Sure Start Mellow Valley staff to identify children with developmental delay and speech language problems. Most Sure Start activities are also supported by OFSTED registered crèche provision, removing the barriers of getting involved. Sure Start Mellow Valley staff work across teams, avoiding the problems with communication breakdown with referrals. They utilise a range of approaches to reach families (groups, one to one, outreach, home-visits, buddy schemes) in order to provide health information, advice and support. Services are parent centred; that is guided by the needs and wants of parents, through regular consultation. But involvement doesn't stop there; parents are encouraged to become involved in the work of Sure Start Mellow Valley through volunteering for various services such as mini-bus driving, breast feeding support or the credit union. A wider civic participation role is encouraged through parents' involvement in governing or 'overseeing' the activities of Sure Start Mellow Valley. The fact that teams had difficulty

Box 3:
Key findings from the Baseline User Satisfaction Survey (BUSS),
Leeds Metropolitan University, Autumn 2004

- Most parents felt that their area had a lack of places/groups to take their child to play or meet other children and two thirds were dissatisfied with outdoor play areas.
- Almost half of the parents said they used childcare on a regular basis. Reasons for not using child care included: no places, lack of information, too expensive and preferring to look after their child themselves.
- Many parents viewed the availability of suitable opportunities for work in the area as poor and over half (57%) were dissatisfied with the available education and training opportunities.
- There was a high level of satisfaction with local health services. Nearly all parents (97%) said that if they needed advice about their child's health, they would turn to either their family doctor/GP or other health professionals.
- Over two thirds thought that there had been an improvement in the activities and support available for parents and children under 4 over the last year. There were high levels of satisfaction with activities and support provided by Sure Start.

recruiting parents onto the Parent Forum, is evidence of the strong need to engage with parents on their own terms, in as fun and informal manner as possible.

How well is it doing?

Early results from the BUSS and Stakeholder Survey show that Sure Start Mellow Valley was meeting the needs of families from a very early stage (see boxes 3 & 4). Families involved with the Sure Start programme reported being very satisfied with the support and activities provided. The primary purpose of the Baseline User Satisfaction Survey was to obtain views from 120 parents on local services and support available to families with children under 4 years. The Stakeholder Survey looked at the development and contribution of the programme to local needs. Some early achievements were captured (see box 4). Evidence from team evaluations has shown that groups such as the Bosom Buddies breast feeding group, ante-natal groups, parenting groups, play in the home scheme and the Home Safety equipment scheme have been successful in providing access to health information and empowering parents to make informed choices. Staff work across teams, liaising with other staff and jointly running core activities. This allows them to make links between families and identify those needing more intensive support. The common assessment framework detailed in *Every Child Matters* talks of the need to reduce the number of assessments, as well as increase the quality of referrals and improve information sharing. In this way, Sure Start Mellow Valley is working to best practice. Sure Start Mellow Valley also appear to link parents to other services; acting as a signpost for other services. This is a particularly key role for the FST (South & Newell, 2006). A range of mediums are used here, such as groups, 1:1, and through home-visits. Sure Start Mellow Valley appears to give parents a voice, ensuring parents feel welcome to make suggestions and actively responding to them by adjusting services accordingly.

Box 4

Key findings from the Stakeholder Survey, Leeds Metropolitan University April 2005

- Sure Start Mellow Valley moved rapidly to develop the programme and deliver core services and is held in high esteem by its stakeholders.
- Overall the programme has a clear vision, very good and strategic management, and uses effective approaches based on the key principles of Sure Start.
- A number of outcomes were identified (see Table 1). Achieving outcomes is dependent on having well developed, quality Sure Start services and having strong links with partner organisations.
- Reach is a continuing challenge, especially given the nature of the area, but it is high on the agenda.
- An outstanding feature of Sure Start Mellow Valley is the depth and extent of parent involvement. Parental involvement leads directly to the programme delivering services that are wanted thereby achieving outcomes.
- 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.

How do activities contribute to better outcomes for families?

There is a strong focus on parental involvement. Sure Start Mellow Valley staff consult with parents regularly, listening to their concerns through mechanisms such as talk-time. They also respond directly to parents' needs by feeding-back suggestions in a reflexive way back into the programme, so that services can be improved. Listening to young people and their families is a key outcome within *Every Child Matters*.

A flexible approach is used to engage with parents, adopting a range of methods that match need. Groups are an invaluable way of promoting learning, bringing together parents socially at the same time as raising awareness and disseminating information. If extra support is required, then individual support can be provided through one to one play sessions with parents. The use of home-visiting is a particularly useful mechanism in picking up problems in a non-threatening way while outreach is used to target families that are hard to reach. Sure Start Mellow Valley use a child centred approach, always aiming to consider issues from the child's perspective.

Providing maximum accessibility to services is key – the team strive to provide an environment that is welcoming, relaxed and culturally aware, noting that for some, English is not the first language and that for many, Sure Start is often the first point of contact for families seeking support. In this way, Sure Start often acts as a signpost for hard-to-reach families, to other important services. This was illustrated in the case of the Kurdish family who needed support from Sure Start Mellow Valley with birth certificates, law centres and fuel supply.

The team's approach to working in partnership with other agencies not only ensures that parents have continuity of service with whomever they make initial contact, but it often means that teams come across families several times. This means seamless service provision for parents, and also builds long term sustainability. *Every Child Matters* talks about the importance of providing universal services for children and families, building the capacity of staff to work across a range of sectors. Here the process is maintained by working alongside other staff, encouraging other staff to use parents as volunteers and acting in an advisory capacity to staff from other professions to share good practice and build capacity. In addition, staff inductions are carried out for new staff that may be unfamiliar with the practices of Sure Start Mellow Valley and its way of working. *Every Child Matters* highlights the need for a skilled and effective workforce (DfES guidance 2005) requiring culture change and a common language between staff used to working in narrower professional boundaries. In this way, Sure Start Mellow Valley provides best practice examples of inter-agency working, bringing people together from different services through supervision and staff training.

What evidence do we have that SSMV has made a difference to families so far?

Every Child Matters provides a useful framework in which to consider the early successes of Sure Start Mellow Valley. The 5 outcomes for children and young people are specified in the Children's Act 2004. They all inter-relate showing the relationship between educational attainment and well-being thereby breaking the cycles of deprivation. The aim is that all organisations work towards the 5 common outcomes to promote children's well-being. Here, early outcomes for Sure Start Mellow Valley are considered in accordance with the 5 key outcomes for children.

Be healthy

This outcome strives to promote children's physical, mental, emotional and sexual health and encourages parents, carers and families to support healthy lifestyle choices. Sure Start Mellow Valley contributes to this outcome through:

- ✓ The Health Team provide access to health information for families in a positive, informal and non-threatening environment.
- ✓ The Play and Learning Team encourage play with young children in a social, informal environment allowing staff to identify developmental delay in a non-threatening environment.
- ✓ The Mini-Movers programme develops children's confidence (6mths – 3yrs) through music and movement, by encouraging children to become more aware of their body.
- ✓ The Strengthening Families and Communities Team provide emotional support through outreach, home-visits and mediation and in doing so attempt to remove the barriers that families might face in attending groups outside of the home.
- ✓ A strong emphasis on parental involvement means that parents automatically learn about children's play and development in a social, fun and non-threatening environment.
- ✓ Working in close partnership with other professionals reduces workload, reduces the need for assessment, builds trust and provides access to streamlined, universal services for families.

Stay Safe

This outcome strives to provide children with stable homes which are safe from neglect, violence, sexual exploitation, accidental injury and bullying. Sure Start Mellow Valley contributes to this outcome through:

- ✓ The use of home visits provides a useful mechanism for picking up family problems in a non threatening way.
- ✓ Parent volunteers can act as buddies to other parents in crisis.
- ✓ Listening to and responding directly to parents needs allows for emerging issues to be picked up and acted upon quickly.
- ✓ Individual support can be provided in a safe, sensitive environment through one-to-one play sessions.
- ✓ Staff members within teams have a range of professional backgrounds but work to create a 'smooth blend' of services so that children and families can transfer from one to another. Working across teams reduces the risk of communication breakdown.
- ✓ Intense family support can be provided through the FST for families with ongoing multiple needs or facing crisis situations.

Enjoy and Achieve

This outcome seeks to prepare children and their families for school so that it is enjoyable and stretching in terms of personal, social and educational attainment. Sure Start Mellow Valley contributes to this outcome through:

- ✓ The Play and Learning Team play a crucial role in identifying children with developmental delay, speech and language problems.
- ✓ The library work of the Play and Learning Team has been very successful, encouraging reading and increasing use of local libraries.
- ✓ Children are assisted in developing essential social skills. Work with local families serves to prepare them for the transition into nursery and school.

- ✓ Building partnerships with key services such as Early Years, local schools and the youth service helps to signpost and link families to other services.
- ✓ Providing services that respond directly to families needs means that families can engage with services on their own terms, providing future opportunities for learning and personal development through volunteering or governance.

Make a contribution

This outcome calls for parents, carers and families to engage in decision making and support the community and environment. Positive, supportive and law abiding behaviour is an inherent part of this process. Sure Start Mellow Valley contributes to this outcome through:

- ✓ The teams encourage parents to get involved in volunteering to deliver services or governing the activities of the Sure Start Mellow Valley programme thereby engaging parents in decision making and increasing civic participation.
- ✓ Parental involvement in the programme demonstrates an increase in parents' confidence and assertiveness.
- ✓ Involvement in service delivery such as credit unions, breast feeding support etc, contributes to the development of enterprising behaviour.

Achieve economic well-being

This outcome supports children, carers and families to be economically active, engaging in further education, employment or training on leaving school. Providing sustainable communities, having access to decent homes, transport and a suitable income is also a key part of this outcome. Sure Start Mellow Valley contributes to this through:

- ✓ The credit union services help people to avoid debt, raise awareness of money and the importance of saving.
- ✓ A strong emphasis on parental involvement means that parents can build skills and confidence through volunteering for activities such as minibus driving, credit union or breast feeding support.
- ✓ Volunteering opportunities provide a stepping stone to future paid employment.
- ✓ Partnerships with housing provide mutual opportunities to respond directly to families need for suitable, good quality housing (see box 5 below).

Box 5: Case Study – working with housing *(From the Stakeholder Survey)*

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: Conclusion

Section 5: Conclusion

While Sure Start Mellow Valley is still a very young programme, the evaluation suggests that it is starting to make a difference to families.

Early on, the programme established a wide range of activities and services, creating opportunities for and meeting the needs of families. The provision of regular groups can be seen as the hub of the programme, often providing the first point of contact for families. The evaluation has highlighted the multi-dimensional nature of groups. As well as providing important opportunities to socialise, have fun, and get to meet other local families, all the groups have clear aims and wider important purposes, many of which are 'hidden'. Groups are used as a vehicle for identifying issues and problems, providing family support, and achieving longer term goals. They are an important way of raising awareness and disseminating information. Staff also provide one-to-one support, often within the family home, and outreach work forms a further important aspect of the programme. This has been key to the programme's efforts to access the hard-to-reach and to meeting the challenge of working within the three different geographical areas.

The Stakeholder Survey identified the issue of programme reach. While it was recognised that the teams have made some successful inroads into reaching 'harder to reach' families, many stakeholders felt that there were still families not in contact with Sure Start. The need to be accessible to the diverse range of families in the three areas remains a principal challenge facing the programme. It is important that the team continues with efforts to reach all families and ensure that services and resources are accessible to and inclusive of all, while continuing to support those with whom they are already working.

While each core team works well as a unit and has distinct aims and objectives, it is also clear that they complement each other and work effectively together. Staff have developed positive ways of working and a holistic approach that have been key to the programme's development. The adoption of a child/family centred approach runs throughout and parents are regularly consulted. Staff have established trust and good relationships with local families and it is evident that parents value and appreciate the activities and services and feel that they and their families have benefited. The programme's ability to be flexible is a further principal strength, enabling changes to be made to aspects of work that have not been successful and the tailoring of provision to best meet the needs of individual families.

Sure Start staff have developed effective partnerships with a range of other professionals. The evaluation highlights the important role of the programme in working alongside, complementing and adding value to the work of other agencies. The programme fulfils an important role, being able to provide extra support to families and working in distinct and alternative ways. The programme has played an important role in providing links between families and key services. Examples include libraries and housing offices as well as working in partnership with a local Credit Union.

There is evidence that the programme has contributed to bringing about positive changes within mainstream services with which it works (a key example being the library service). This provides strong indication of the programme's influence and the high esteem in which it is held. The respect which professionals have for the programme and the importance they attach to its work is also evidenced through positive feedback and the growing numbers of families which they have referred.

This came through particularly strongly in the evaluation of the FST, which showed that the team are held in the highest regard by other professionals. Sure Start Mellow Valley has an important influence in terms of providing support and sharing good practice with other local groups and through the employment and training of local people and students. Providing parents with the skills and opportunity to work as volunteers is a further positive contribution. It is clear from the evaluation that the programme has extended its sphere of influence and developed new links both with both parents and fellow professionals. The potential of the programme in this regard was raised within the Stakeholder Survey and it is encouraging that the team have had some success in addressing this issue.

Both the Year 2 and previous evaluation activities have revealed a number of positive aspects of the programme, identified by parents, partner professionals and staff. The team has a vast bank of experience in terms of what works. With the move to Children's Centres, it is vital that this experience and knowledge is sufficiently valued and that what has been learnt and achieved by the programme is not lost but taken on board and fully recognised.

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Section 6: Appendices

Appendix 1: The Current Sure Start Mellow Valley Team (July 2006)

POSITION	NAME
Acting Programme Manager	Mary Weston
Co-ordinator Strengthening Families and Communities (Job Share)	Wendy Gledhill (18.5 hours)
Co-ordinator Strengthening Families and Communities (Job Share)	Wendy Showell-Nicholas (18.5 hours)
Acting Co-ordinator for Improving Children's Ability to Learn	Sara Slater and Liz Shillito (37 hours)
Parent Involvement Worker (p/t)	Donna Toulson (18.5 hours) Part funded by ERDF
Parent Involvement Worker (p/t)	Joanne Dearlove
Parent Involvement Worker (p/t)	Emma Johns
Family Support Worker (p/t)	Janet Daley (21 hours)
Family Support Worker (p/t)	Debbie Ripley (21 hours)
Parent Training Co-ordinator (p/t)	Sarah Grant (not in post yet) (37 hours) Part funded by ERDF
Volunteer Co-ordinator (p/t)	Steph Ward (18.5 hours)
Volunteer Co-ordinator (p/t)	Mary Delaney (not in post yet) (18.5 hours ERDF funded)
Early Years Development Worker	Sara Slater (37 hours)
Early Years Development Worker	Liz Shillito (37 hours)
Information Worker (p/t)	Post vacant (18.5 hours - Part funded by ERDF)
Administration Manager	Katie Dunham
Finance Officer (p/t)	Lorraine McGowan (working only sessional hours until new Finance Officer is recruited).
Office Assistant (p/t)	Suada Khan (21 hours)
Childcare Worker (p/t)	Helen Weston (32 hours)
Childcare Worker (p/t)	Amy Smith (16 hours)
Early Years Library Worker (p/t) Secoded through Libraries	Judith Shalkowski (19 hours)
Senco Inclusion Worker (p/t) Secoded through Early Years	Mel Midgeley (21 hours)
Childminding Development Worker	Kirsten Redshaw (not in post yet) (18.5 hours - Part ERDF funded)

Midwife Seconded through NHS Trust	Tanya Dimmick
Health Nursery Nurse Seconded through PCT	Laura Board (37 hours)
Health and Family Support Worker	Jill Philp (not in post yet) (35 hours)
Other Sessional Childcare Workers	5 workers
Cleaner	Tina Smith
Cleaner	Helen O'Toole

ERDF = European Regional Development Funding

Appendix 2: Partnership Members

Our current partnership membership includes representatives from the following organisations and individuals

- Local parents and carers
- The Children's Society (Regional Management and LARCH Project).
- Health Visiting, Midwifery and School Nursing Services (Primary Care Trust North East and Primary Care Trust North West)
- Health Promotion Service (PCT NE and PCT NW)
- 0-16 Team
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Leeds Early Years Development and Child-Care Partnership
- Child-Care and Early Development Service (Early Years Centres and Integrated Centre (3 in Little London and Woodhouse, 1 in Meanwood area)
- Primary Schools In The Area (2 in Meanwood, 3 in Little London and Woodhouse)
- Special school (1 in Little London/Woodhouse)
- Parent Partnership Service
- Social Services Department (Roundhay Road and White Rose House Offices)
- Housing Department
- Neighbourhood Warden (Little London Area)
- Leeds Library Service
- Local Community Centres
- Parks and Countryside Dept
- Community Involvement Team
- Local Councillors and MP
- SRB3 Link Worker
- West Yorkshire Police
- Local Further Education Providers
- West Leeds FSU
- C.A.L.L.S (Community Action Little London and Servia's)
- Leeds Pre-School Learning Alliance
- Home-Start
- Victim Support
- Local clergy
- Children in Reception/Year One classes in two local primary schools have also contributed to the planning process.

Appendix 3: Description of Sure Start Mellow Valley Groups

Mini Movers is a group aimed at encouraging parents to interact with their children through moving to music and singing. The group aims to promote and help parents to realise the importance of physical activity.

Bumps & Babes is a group for pregnant mothers and parents with children up to one year old. It is an informal social drop-in group which acts as a good source of information. Themes have included nutrition, play and safety information. Two dietician students have been involved in the group as well as an outreach worker from Quarry Mount Primary School.

Friday Friends is a group for pregnant mums, babies and children. Play activities are provided for children aged 0-4 years and parents/carers have the opportunity to meet others with children of similar ages.

Stay & Play is held at the Miles Hill bungalow and provides play activities and an opportunity to meet other parents and carers. The Library Worker also attends and a visit to the Mobile Library Bus forms part of the session.

Quarry Mount Play Session (Thursday afternoons). This is the same as Friday Friends and is run by a member of the Play and Learning Team and an outreach worker from Quarry Mount Children's Centre.

Appendix 4: Database of evaluation frameworks for Sure Start Mellow Valley activities

The following evaluation frameworks were put together by the staff of Sure Start Mellow Valley staff with support from the evaluation team. The teams were encouraged to identify their main activities and consider:

- long term goals
- expected outcomes (what will happen because of the activity)
- Indicators of success (what would show that the activity had made a difference to parents or children)
- evidence (whether there was any evidence to show that short term or medium term outcomes had been met)

For some activities, there was already some evidence but Sure Start staff were also encouraged to identify how evidence might be collected in the future (this is shown by an information symbol .

The comments at the bottom of the framework have been taken from interviews, questionnaires and other types of information collected in the course of the evaluation.

Please note: The work of the Family Support team (within Strengthening Families and Communities) is not listed here as it was the subject of a separate in-depth evaluation in 2006.

Core activity	Accident prevention scheme
Description of activity	<p>Home safety equipment scheme includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - safety gates and fireguards provided at low cost with free fitting; - home safety packs contain draw/cupboard locks x 6, corner cushions x 8, fridge / toilet lock x 1, socket covers x 12, door stopper x 1. - other equipment such as scald plugs, room thermometer, reins. Extra socket covers can be distributed by staff on a need basis. - sign posting of free smoke detector fittings and home fire checks from the fire service. - age appropriate books on safety and health and activities to be given away on visits and in groups. A pre-birth book to be distributed by midwives.
Long term goal	Reduction of accidents involving children in the home (Less A&E admissions for accidents)
Team	Health

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
<p>Short term</p> <p>Families will use the safety equipment in their homes</p>	<p>A steady number of families approach SSMV to obtain a gate or fireguard</p>	<p>Routine monitoring data on number of safety gates and fireguards given out is collected.</p>
<p>Families will have greater awareness of accident prevention in the home</p>	<p>Parents using the safety scheme report good knowledge of how the equipment should be used/understanding of appropriate accident prevention for age of child</p>	<p>Short telephone survey of parents registered for the home equipment scheme.</p>
	<p>Parents report they have used safety equipment</p>	<p>24 parents interviewed (see Appendix 7).</p>
<p>Long term</p> <p>Decrease in accidents involving babies and young children in the home</p>	<p>Change in number of A&E admissions in Sure Start area³</p>	<p>Find routine data and check if can be updated.</p>

Comments
<p>Comments from telephone survey (for more information, please see Appendix 7)</p> <p>Have safety gates made a difference to the safety of the home?</p> <p>Parents said:</p> <p><i>“A lot because it gave peace of mind with child on stairs.”</i></p> <p><i>“A lot – can’t get to dangerous stuff in the kitchen – they are fab.”</i></p> <p><i>“Have more confidence and can let daughter get on and play.”</i></p>

³ Change may not be attributable to the equipment scheme

How did parents find the ordering and fitting system?

“Very good, excellent. Filled out form on Friday and they were fitted by the Wednesday.”

“Short process – quick and efficient – good explanations.”

“Publicity could be improved – I heard by word of mouth”

“The Home Safety Equipment Scheme is working well but we are looking to make changes – adopting a more structured approach to giving out information (such as through presentations or giving talks in homes) rather than just giving the equipment out” (Staff member).

Core activity	Baby Massage
Description of activity	Baby massage, one to one in home or in groups. Focuses on relaxation, bonding and early communication. Benefits include increased flexibility, circulation, appetite, sleep pattern, muscle tone. Helps with colic: they receive referrals from health visitors etc
Long term goal	Improving health Supporting parent-child bonding
Team	Health and Play and Learning

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Good parent-child interaction	Parents report less sleeping problems	Discussion with parents in group
Parents develop confidence to care for their babies		
Parents confident to do baby massage	Parents use baby massage at home	Feedback in groups 

Comments

Some benefits of Baby Massage:

- Aids communication, both verbal and non verbal.
- Increased parental competence in relating to and handling the baby.
- Positive effects extend to other relationships, i.e. to partner and other children.
- Teaching in groups offers parents the opportunity for reciprocal exchange of ideas and experiences. Sharing ideas, learning and developing an understanding about different cultures.
- Fun and Play
- For babies with special needs, it promotes relaxation of tense muscles.
- Helps baby to accept touch and to associate it as something positive (especially in babies who have experienced traumatic hospital intervention).
- Promotes weight gain.
- Improvement in eye contact and interaction with others.



Comments from parents attending baby massage

Comments taken from evaluation forms distributed by staff

- Would you recommend this group to other parents?

"Yes, it's been a great experience and I've loved every minute of it".

- How has massage affected your baby and /or your relationship with your baby?

"When I do it she really enjoys it a lot. You can easily tell by the impression on her face. She gets relaxed and it also helps her sleep. It helps me feel better as well. I am delighted with activities through which my baby can enjoy herself."

"Before doing this course, I was feeling very low. This course helped me a lot to feel more involved with my baby and with life in general...I found this practice very relaxing. I feel much happier now and have more confidence to take on other similar courses in the future."

- What did you like best about the class?

"Although I practice the massage techniques at home I really enjoyed massaging in a group. I benefited from observing other mums with their babies."

"Being with other mums and sharing different experiences".

"The classes were flexible enough to adapt to individual needs, whilst following a plan at the same time".

- What has been the most important experience with your baby since the class?

"The physical intimacy and emotional closeness".

"My baby enjoyed the massage, and I found that experience very nice".

"Having the closeness and being able to relax with my baby".

- How did your instructor help you to feel comfortable in the class?

She was always very welcoming and was always ready to make suggestions about adapting techniques I was having difficulty with."

- Suggestions for the class?

"Maybe a class for adapting the strokes for older children".

Core activity	Group work (with health focus)
Description of activity	Informal and formal dissemination of relevant health information in regular Sure Start groups.
Long term goal	To empower parents to make informed choices about improving and maintaining the health of their family
Team	Health

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
<p>Short term Parents are able to make informed choices.</p> <p>Parents are more likely to ask for and get health information</p> <p>Parents have better knowledge of local health services and other services for young children.</p>	<p>Parents keep returning to groups and asking questions.</p> <p>Staff hear of parents sharing information about health issues with other parents</p> <p>Parents attend other activities (signposting).</p>	<p>Health Team receive anecdotal feedback from parents attending the groups.</p> <p>Some group evaluations provide feedback, issues covered and short term outcomes</p>
<p>Medium term Parents have confidence to make decisions and are reassured that they are doing the right thing.</p> <p>Parents adopt healthy behaviours.</p>	<p>Parents feedback knowledge and understanding</p> <p>Parents report feeling confident and positive about health choices</p> <p>Parents report making changes in parenting behaviour</p>	<p>Questionnaires to parents attending groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday Friends • Bumps & Babes • Stay & Play <p>(see Appendix 6)</p>
<p>Development of health education resources that can be used in different situations</p>	<p>Materials available</p>	<p>Records of multiagency use of topic boxes</p>
<p>Short term 'Inroads' into practice of other practitioners</p> <p>Medium term Changes in mainstream professional practice in relation to provision of health information and support in group settings</p>	<p>Some mainstream services changed practice through working with Sure start</p>	<p>Team to identify examples e.g. importance of keeping groups open each week</p>

Comments

Questionnaire – 16 parents at the 3 groups (see Appendix 6)

Benefits of attending group

- ✓ Making friends (11 parents)
- ✓ Giving knowledge of other services (11 parents)
- ✓ Giving parenting information (9 parents)
- ✓ Gaining health advice (7 parents)

12 parents reported that they had done something new or differently with their children at home as a result of attending the group.

“I feel comfortable about asking the staff anything” (Parent).

“I really enjoy coming. I meet different people and get to know a lot”. (Parent).

Staff views

Nutritional talks provided within groups are one example that the team felt worked particularly well:

“The information was presented in a logical, simple and informative manner and included practical tools that families can use while shopping”. (Staff member)

“The Friday Friends group has got a really good following, a nice atmosphere and a variety of ages. We’ve had people that have come and have continued to come back. It has worked well bringing the Health and Early Years teams together. The parents like it and there are lots of topics and conversations that come up. It works well as a group”. (Staff member).

Core activity	Health Centre notice boards
Description of activity	To provide information to families/to make good links with other health teams
Long term goal	Ensure families have access to Sure Start services
Team	Health

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
That families will see the boards and gain a variety of information	The amount of leaflets taken.	
A good working relationship between Sure Start and other health teams	Comments from parents Comments from health visitors on Health Team's attendance at meetings/events	Meeting minutes, comments book? 
More people will know about Sure Start, register, attend groups or receive support	Number of referrals from health Registration numbers Family support clients	Stakeholder survey Records

Comments
This activity though essential has not been evaluated. The Health Team suggested that a question is asked on registration: 'where did you hear about us?'. Results will give an indication of the success of dissemination.

Core activity	Breastfeeding support
Description of activity	Breastfeeding support from midwife and peer supporters Bosom Buddies Breastfeeding group
Long term goal	To increase breastfeeding rates and length of time breastfeeding
Team	Health

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Increase in support for breastfeeding mums	Women attend Bosom Buddies Breastfeeding group.	Monitoring Training register
Increase in number of mothers breastfeeding.	Increased number of women trained and giving peer support.	Contact register
Increase in length of time mums are breastfeeding from 6 months minimum to a year	Breastfeeding women accessing peer supporters. Problems with breastfeeding are identified and alleviated/overcome. Women feel supported through breastfeeding problems. Mums give positive comments and feedback and have a positive attitude towards breastfeeding.	Records made of breastfeeding status when registering new families. Register. Basic monitoring of advice requested. Telephone feedback. Collaborating with health visitors and PCT with regard to collecting statistics for breastfeeding rates at 6 months and one year. Collected at 1 year check.  Record of telephone or face to face contact. Record of problems addressed.  Quick questionnaire to find out issues addressed by peer supporters and at Bosom Buddies group.

Comments
The Bosom Buddies Breastfeeding Support Group at Craven Road ran from September 2005 until May 2006 a total of 29 times. During this time six parents accessed the group. One parent came 14 times, one parent came 9 times, three parents came 2 times and one parent came once. The group has now been relocated to Woodhouse Health Centre and runs at the same time as the health visitors' baby clinic and the midwives' antenatal postnatal drop in clinic.

From the period of May 2005- May 2006

Sure Start parents have had access to a midwife and midwifery information at 3 weekly held groups, on trips, via the telephone or at Beulah Hall or the Miles Hill bungalow. A wide variety of topics have been brought up by families, including contraception, pregnancy, physical, sexual, and emotional health, breastfeeding, and care and development of the new born.

The midwife has provided added individual support around:

- antenatal issues =15
- postnatal issues = 14
- emotional and social support = 10
- breastfeeding = 8.

Some of the individual work that the midwife has done with families has not been recorded, as much of the midwifery support was simply recorded as a 'home visit' which involves a family or new baby being registered with Sure Start. Fuller information has now started to be recorded after it was highlighted to the programme by the midwife. The midwife has made 35 home visits at least half at which she gave specific added antenatal, postnatal or infant feeding information or support.

Core activity	Weaning talks
Description of activity	Weaning talks for parents. Also aims to start a weaning group for parents (rolling programme) that parents can access.
Long term goal	Improved child nutrition Improved health
Team	Health

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
More parents wait until their baby is 6 months old before weaning their baby.	Health visitors report more parents adopting weaning advice.	Comments from Health Visitors Discussion with parents
More parents choose to give their babies home cooked natural foods and keep salt and sugar out of their diets.	Parents report adopting good weaning practice. groups Parents' practice reflects health advice given in weaning talks	Evaluation sheets from the group or more detailed questionnaires to follow up.  Observing what parents feed children in groups; on home visits.
That parents start to think about their child's teeth before they have any.	Parents may talk about teeth (water given at all groups)	Discussion with parents Questionnaire or post box, so parents can answer and post their answers confidentially. 
That water is given as the main drink and beakers introduced early.	Less children will need fillings or more children registered at dentists in our areas.	By making a link with dentists in the area to get views. 

Comments
The weaning talks have not had any formal follow up evaluation although the Health Team have suggested that follow up questionnaires could be done. There is some anecdotal evidence: <i>"Health visitors are pleased with the number of mums attending. From doing this group I now have the tools to do a weaning talk anywhere".</i> (Staff member)
Through the weaning talks, the team have received a number of referrals and follow up home visits have been made.

Core activity	Library work - partnerships
Description of activity	Work with Leeds City Council library services to improve services for children and families
Long term goal	More children reading and using libraries Improving ability to learn
Team	Play and Learning Team

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Improvement in library services for parents and young children	Library service has 'changed dramatically'.	Interview with local librarian – reported service changes and working with Sure Start Survey of library use with Sure Start parents (2005)
Parents and young children able to access library services more easily	Relaxed regulations re: registering for the library (used to require passports etc.) Weekly library bus started in Meanwood. Serves school, Sure Start bungalow and can be used by community.	Numbers of people using the library bus

Comments
<p><u>Library Training</u> Early Years Library Training for librarians and early years workers delivering Early Years Story Time Sessions across Leeds was developed through the Library/Sure Start Mellow Valley link. The library worker took the lead on developing the training on a team of 6 library/Sure Start members. The training was delivered by one children's librarian, and two Sure Start early years librarians. The event was held in Leeds with a maximum of 14 participants, two courses, each course held over 2 half days. The course evaluations had a very positive response with librarians already delivering storytime sessions with more confidence. Last course was on 11 July, and a report is pending.</p> <p><u>Quotes from an interview with a Library Area Service Manager:</u></p> <p>“Our partnership has worked well and has brought about good results for us in terms of developing our skills and bringing people into libraries.”</p> <p>“Working with Sure Start is helping library staff to learn to communicate better with children. Sure Start have a better understanding of children’s needs and can pass this on to library staff.”</p> <p><u>Policy Change</u> The involvement of Sure Start Mellow Valley has led to an important “no ID required” policy change within the whole of Leeds Library Services for Sure Start members. Families can now join the library through providing a Sure Start letter of invitation. This has made it possible for families who struggle to provide 2 forms of ID to join the library.</p>

Core activity	Library work - reading activities with children
Description of activity	Running activities encouraging reading and use of libraries
Long term goal	More children reading Improving ability to learn
Team	Play and Learning Team

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
More parents aware and accessing local library services	New users taking up the Bookstart scheme and attending the library	Log of Bookstart Interview with Library Area Service Manager
Parents in habit of going to library and accessing books	Evidence that parents are using library	Survey of library use with Sure Start parents (2005)
Parents confident to use books with children	Evidence that parents are reading/story telling with children	

Comments		
<u>Quarterly Statistics – July – September 2005</u>		
Outreach Visits		
Venue	Children	Adults
Lovell Park EYC (x2)	18	7
Scott Hall EYC (x2)	8	9
Miles Hill Primary School (Oct)	42	18
Miles Hill Primary School (Nov)	7	1
Summer Events		
Venue	Children	Adults
Play in the school	15	8
Play in the farm	12	5
Play in the school	12	7
Play in the park	4	2
Play in the school	17	10
In-house Library sessions		
Venue	Children	Adults
Sessions – Stay & Play (weekly)	14	10
Prince Philip Centre Session (occasional)	10	7
Computer Course (4 weeks, Ch All)	5	3

Data from mobile library recorded visits shows steadily increasing attendance:

January 2006 25 adults 37 children
February 2006 22 adults 60 children
March 2006 43 adults 108 children

Book Club

In May and June 2006, a Book Club for Sure Start parents in the Meanwood area was developed and conducted at the Bungalow.

- In preparation, parents were consulted as to useful resources prior to purchasing.
- The crèche was established with a reading focus.
- The routine involved: returning and selecting books, quiet reading time with hot drinks and snacks, information from team members regarding resources, helpful parenting information regarding modelling good reading skills and practice, and group discussion times.

The course involved four parents over four weeks. The Central Library Children's Librarian and Sure Start Early Years Library Worker were both involved.



Mum and baby enjoying reading

Extract from the Quality Assurance and Safe Practice Audit undertaken within Sure Start Mellow Valley, September 2005 (For more information, see Appendix 9)

How does the work of the project make a difference to the lives of young people?

...A further example of how the Sure Start has made a difference to the lives of young people/parents/carers is in the extensive work undertaken in challenging decisions/plans relating to library provision, and the influence it has had in enabling access to books/computers in areas where library provision had previously been cut back.

Core activity	Mini Movers
Description of activity	Mini movers, a physical, interactive group that enables children to use their bodies in ways that they feel comfortable. Focus on developing body awareness, muscle building, flexibility, and improving skills in balancing, decision making, singing and confidence building.
Long term goal	Improving social and emotional development
Team	Improving the ability to learn Play and Learning Team & Health Team

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Physical, social and emotional development	See children move through stages of development	Staff observation
Children have improved body awareness and skills in balancing, singing etc.		Personal scrapbooks compiled by parents for individual children, showing skills and abilities
Learning about having choices and making them for themselves, and being independent	Children make decisions on what they want to take part in and access	Staff observation
Children to share and enjoy experiences with parent/carer, building on interaction and communication.	Children being proud of achievements, wanting parent/carer to join in.	

Comments

Photos from Mini Movers group





Core activity	Regular groups for parents and children
Description of activity	Play sessions offer exciting activities for children to enjoy with their parent/carer. Groups encourage interaction between parent and child while building on important skills that will help enable for a smoother transition into nursery/school.
Long term goal	Improving social and emotional development Improving the ability to learn
Team	Play and Learning Team

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Children enjoying themselves	Children happy to greet and meet Sure Start staff at groups Feedback from parents	Observation by staff Course evaluations from three groups
Young children gaining confidence and skills turn taking, sharing, playing together, communication.	Parents and staff see skills and confidence develop and grow	A series of short visual reports documenting children's participation in different types of play and learning activities.
Building on and making new relationships. Social development and skills Parents involved in supporting child's development	Parents understand and enjoy the benefits of different play activities Children with special needs who require more support identified	Course evaluations from three groups Referrals to Sure Start teams and other agencies Case studies
Parents feel comfortable and at ease in groups Making friendships	Parents coming back and telling their friends about the groups. Good attendance	Group registers

Comments
<i>Comments taken from parent questionnaires – Appendix 8.</i>
<i>"I come to the groups so that my kids can play with other kids and I can talk to other mums".</i>
<i>"For my kids to play and interact and enjoy time with other kids".</i>
<i>"Watching my little girl learning new skills and being able to choose from a wide range of activities".</i>
Parents establish strong, trusting relationships with workers and this may lead to family support intervention.

Core activity	Birthday Parties
Description of activity	Parents and children invited to attend birthday parties on month of child's birthday.
Long term goal	To showcase all Sure Start activities in a family friendly way. To encourage new parents to get involved
Team	Strengthening Families and Communities

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Parent to parent contact and with children	Parents interact with each other and their children	Observation Comments sheet at end of party
Encouraging new parents to attend and hard to reach families	That they attend and build contact with Sure Start Staff	Registers
Encourage parent child activities	Parents access Sure Start groups/services having been signposted from Birthday parties.	Verbal – parents report having been told about groups/services at Birthday Parties.
To showcase all Sure Start activities in a family friendly environment, e.g. healthy eating and home safety info via party bags. Workers available to introduce themselves and their roles.		

Comments
<i>"Birthday parties have always been well attended. We've organised extra parties as well, for example Christmas, Eid and Chinese New Year". (Staff member)</i>
<i>"Sometimes the parties are the parents' first opportunity to come to anything. They get invited to a party, they come along and we can then give them further information". (Staff member)</i>

Core activity	Initial Home Visits
Description of activity	Parent Involvement Workers and other Sure Start staff visit new families
Long term goal	To ensure that all families with children under 4 in the area are kept in touch with Sure Start activities and services and are given info about Sure Start. To break down barriers to families accessing services.
Team	Strengthening Families and Communities

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Introduce Sure Start services and encourage access	If parent/family attend any service	Internal referral procedure - registers for different activities
Offer support and advice	Positive family attitude	Face to face contact Feedback

Comments
<p>Through initial home visits, the Sure Start team aims to ‘take services to families rather than waiting for families to come to us’.</p> <p><i>“The families actually coming out and getting involved with other Sure Start services is an indicator that it’s worked”.</i> (Staff member)</p> <p>Outreach work – <i>“We’ve been involved in sorting out quite critical things for families and have become a familiar face for them”</i> (Staff member)</p> <p>Initial home visits are a vehicle to ensure other organisations can refer new people that have just moved to the area to Sure Start and they will be seen quickly.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>A case study: G arrived from overseas with her family. When she first met the team she openly admitted she was depressed, lonely and very shy. After an initial home registration visit, she was supported in attending one of our play sessions. We visited her at home regularly, befriended her and built up her trust. To overcome language barriers, we gave her a notepad and when she didn’t understand words, wrote them down and translated them. We encouraged her to attend training (healthy eating, confidence building, ESOL).</p> </div>

Core activity	<i>Involvement in North West Extended Schools Task Group</i>
Description of activity	Contributing to development of extended services in North West wedge
Long term goal	Better provision for families
Team	<i>Strengthening Families and Communities</i>

<i>What difference do they make?</i>		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Contribute to development of extended services	That work is developed and enhanced	Minutes of meetings Feedback from pilot clusters to task group
Partnership working	To enhance working together to provide joined up services and influencing outcome	To avoid duplication of services – no data as yet 

<i>Comments</i>

Core activity	North West and North East Wedge Children Leeds
Description of activity	Contribute to the development of 'Children Leeds'
Long term goal	Better provision for children
Team	Strengthening Families and Communities

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Raise awareness of SSMV activities	Attending meetings regularly Presenting work of SSMV	Minutes of meeting Recent evaluation of open event
Partnership working to maximise development for children and young people	Representing agency in a positive manner and contributing to strategic development	Minutes

Comments
<p>The Stakeholder Survey (2005) highlighted the importance of Sure Start influencing mainstream services as this quote illustrates:</p> <p><i>"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."</i> (Stakeholder survey - Health visitor).</p>

Core activity	Parent Forums
Description of activity	Regular Parent Forums are held in different localities
Long term goal	To be aware of parents' views so that the programme can meet parents' needs
Team	Strengthening Families and Communities

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Parents feed in information, comments on activities	Parents attend and share views	Register Evaluation sheets
Governance is met through parent participation i.e. Forums and management board	That board members attend with parents and in discussion views are aired	Evaluation sheets Minutes of meetings Stakeholder survey – interviews with parents

Comments
<p>There are currently two Parent Forums but the team are working towards having 3 to reflect the geographical area. The Stakeholder survey found high levels of parental involvement:</p> <p><i>"If any issues come up you can speak to the Forum – or you can go and talk to the manager. (Parent)</i></p> <p><i>"Parents' voices are listened to, valued and acted on". (Board member)</i></p> <p>Recently the team have struggled with attendances at Parent Forums:</p> <p><i>"It's been hard to strike the balance - Sure Start governance is about listening to parents, about how parents are experiencing the services. There has to be some sort of Sure Start agenda in the forums, but we try to organise it and facilitate it in a way that doesn't feel imposing and this can be quite hard". (Staff member).</i></p>

Core activity	Promoting volunteers within Sure Start Mellow Valley
Description of activity	Recruiting volunteers Identifying volunteering opportunities in the programme
Long term goal	Strengthening communities
Team	Strengthening Families and Communities

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
People will apply to the volunteers	There will be volunteers engaged in activities within the programme	Volunteer files, lists of volunteers awaiting training. Completed application forms
Workers and families will identify activities for volunteers to be involved in	Staff will work in a way where they are considering the role of volunteers and seeing them as a resource that can be used to enhance the work of the programme	Evaluation of groups Case review meetings Internal referral forms

Comments
<p>Stakeholder Survey – 2005</p> <p><i>“My involvement has given me a lot of confidence... it’s a unique opportunity”.</i> (Parent)</p> <p><i>“The people who are involved, once they are over the difficulty of getting involved are empowered and definitely benefit.”</i> (Health visitor).</p>

Core activity	Training and ongoing support for volunteers
Description of activity	Training volunteers Support and Supervision (monthly volunteer meetings)
Long term goal	Strengthening families and communities
Team	Strengthening Families and Communities

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Volunteers will attend training and all receive the same information so have a standard approach to volunteering	Training is successful and volunteers use skills and knowledge in their work. Volunteers identify further training needs	Final interview records, evaluation of training by volunteers and trainers 
Volunteers receive ongoing support and supervision	Volunteers identify what they hope to gain from volunteering and these goals are reviewed in supervision to ensure they are being met	Supervision notes, track what volunteers do when they leave

Comments
<p><i>“The training has been very successful and feedback has been really positive – they feel that they have the skills and knowledge to go on and do voluntary work”. (Staff member)</i></p> <p><i>“We are widening the volunteering opportunities. People can move through different types of voluntary work as their skill level and confidence improves. We can provide a continuum where they can gain confidence and broaden their experience”. (Staff member).</i></p>

Core activity	Involving and supporting volunteers
Description of activity	Involving and supporting volunteers in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddies scheme • Groups • Credit Union • Mini bus driving • Toy library • Breast feeding peer support • Crèche work
Long term goal	The work of the programme is enhanced by the work which volunteers do
Team	Strengthening Families and Communities

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
<u>Buddies Scheme</u> – Volunteers are matched with families to provide support	Regular reviews with volunteers and family	Family contract Supervision notes Family files
<u>Groups</u> – Volunteers are working in groups	Workers/Volunteers and service users identify that the group has been successful	Group evaluation Review of group activities
<u>Credit Union</u> – Volunteers are involved with the running of collection points	Collection points are run at different venues and are used by local families	Evaluation
<u>Mini-bus driving</u> – Volunteers attend Leeds Alternative Travel training and drive bus for SSMV events	Volunteers drive the mini bus for SSMV events/trips	Mini bus log
<u>Toy Library</u> – Volunteers could be involved with the running of Little London Toy Library	Toy library is used by local people	Register of users, evaluation
<u>Breast feeding Peer Support</u> – Peer supporters are working in groups and with families	Volunteers are matched with groups/families Increase in breastfeeding	Evaluation/monitoring
<u>Crèche Work</u> – Volunteers can gain childcare experience in crèches	Volunteers work in crèche and go on to do childcare courses	Evaluation, monitors, tracking of what volunteers do next

Comments
“I have been in post since September 05 after the post had been vacant for some time. The volunteering is still very much in the development stage and many of the activities listed are about to start. 12 volunteers have almost completed training and 3 are already trained and engaged in voluntary work”. (Staff member)

Core activity	Financial Monitoring and Processing
Description of activity	As above
Long term goal	Financial Stability
Team	Administration

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Budget is spent efficiently and as intended	SS returns are submitted on time – money in bank account	End of year returns Audit
Suppliers paid on time Can monitor expenditure on an ongoing basis Board and staff agree budget	Equipment and resources are available Quality resources for children and families	Transaction log Equipment purchased Feedback from staff

Comments
The Management Board (which is comprised of half parents and half professionals) have input into financial decision making.

Core activity	Monitoring
Description of activity	Produce data for Sure Start unit and for everyday use and analysis of data
Long term goal	Data informing programme development
Team	Administration

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Good quality data – up to date and useful	People/staff use the data – data seems reliable	Actual database
Use data to see gaps and for others to plan services		People use data to change their services
Can track a family's referral, registration visit, activities attended, equipment borrowed etc – all through database.		Referral system for families to programme is easy for users to access and for workers to pick up and implement.

Comments
Useful to bring together different workers who have input with a family and to see how the services complement each other.

Core activity	Office Management
Description of activity	Day-to-day support and maintenance of buildings
Long term goal	Workable and efficient staff base
Team	Administration

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Well functioning and efficient office. Well cared for building. All resources and equipment are available. Building is well used by other services and partner agencies.		

Comments

Core activity	Publicity
Description of activity	To produce good publicity about Sure Start services and events
Long term goal	Everybody knows of events and can access appropriate publicity
Team	Administration

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Higher attendance of activities and more families involved Other professionals are aware of our activities Families feel involved in Sure Start activities through photos and newsletter articles which include them. Publicity promotes the Children's Society branding.	Database shows higher attendance figures	Database shows higher attendance figures

Comments
Stakeholder Survey 2005
<i>"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)</i>
<i>"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". (Board member)</i>

Core activity	Reception
Description of activity	Create a welcoming, friendly and efficient atmosphere encouraging safe use of buildings
Long term goal	Improve access to Sure Start
Team	Administration

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Public perception of programme (Parents and professionals) Procedures are followed – building is safe	Building is well used Good feedback from staff, professionals and families Local families feel ownership of the buildings and see them as a site where they are always welcome and can call in about all kinds of queries.	Fire log Signing in and out sheet Need to collect testimonials of staff and parents 

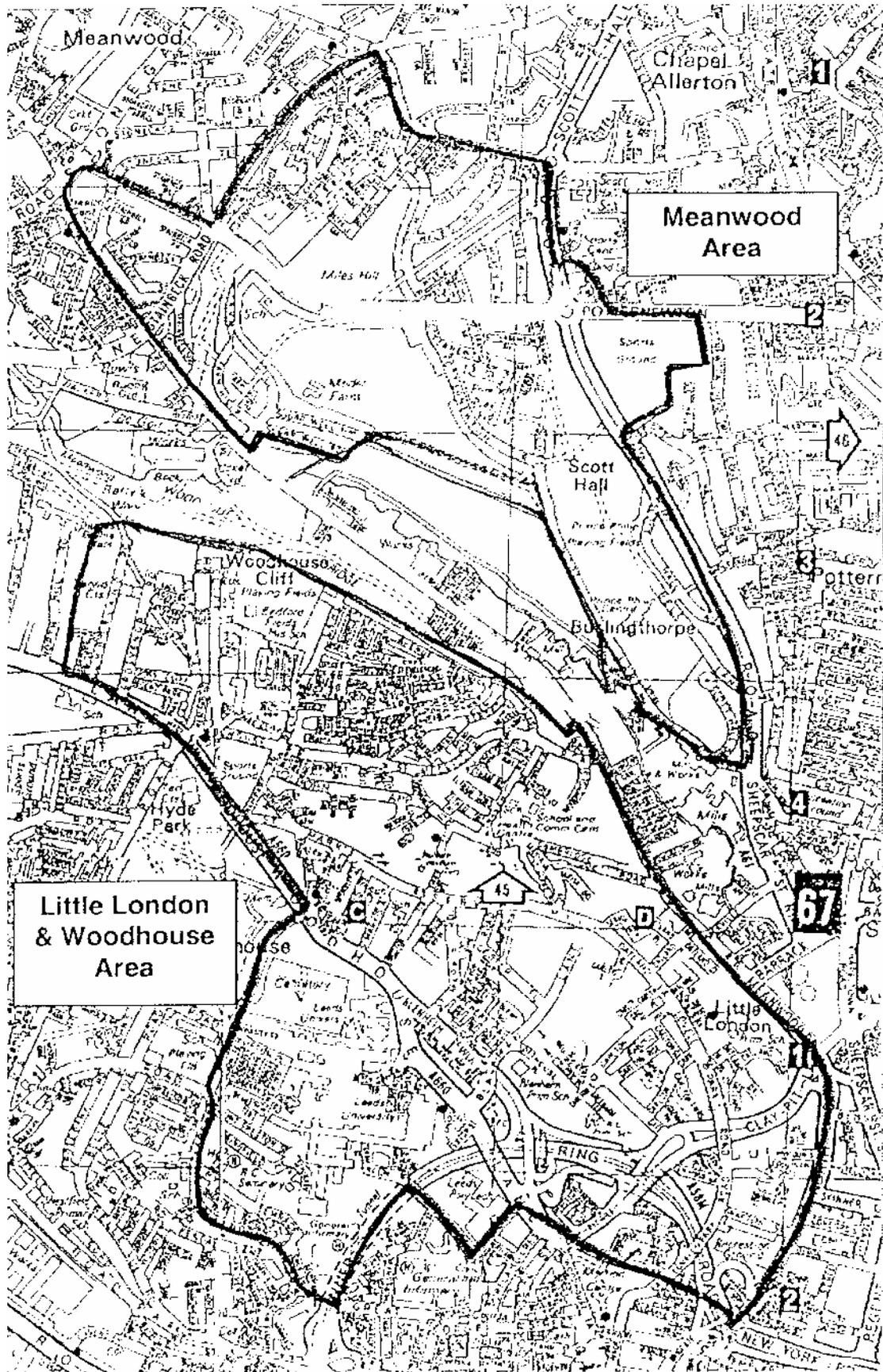
Comments
The buildings are a public resource that are well used and feel part of the community.

Core activity	Supporting the management board
Description of activity	As above
Long term goal	Strong and effective governance of programme
Team	Administration

What difference do they make?		
Expected outcomes	Indicators of success	Evidence
Board meets regularly, well attended, good discussions take place.	Parent members become chair/vice chair. Good decisions are made at right times.	Attendance lists, minutes
Parents are empowered to make decisions. Other professionals are involved and work in partnership	High attendance lists Programme has strong vision and leadership	Feedback from board members, collected in audit. 50% board is parents

Comments
<p>Stakeholder Survey 2005</p> <p>'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' (Evaluation team)</p> <p>The Board is comprised of various local partners who can ensure that Sure Start is championed in many sectors, including local parents.</p>

Appendix 5: Map of the Sure Start Mellow Valley area



Appendix 6: Health Team - Results from group questionnaires with parents

The Health Team conducted questionnaires with parents in order to gauge their opinions and experiences of a selection of groups. Questionnaires were distributed at the following three Sure Start activities:

- Friday Friends (jointly run with the Play & Learning team)
- Bumps & Babes
- Stay & Play (jointly run with the Play & Learning team)

Sample sizes are very small and results should be interpreted with caution.

A total of 16 questionnaires were returned. Table 1 below shows the number of questionnaires completed at each group.

Table 1:

Group	Number of questionnaires completed
Friday Friends	7
Bumps & Babes	3
Stay & Play	6

Length of time attending (n =14)

Table 2 shows the length of time respondents had been coming to the group. It can be seen that over half the parents (9) had been attending for six months or more.

Table 2: Length of time attending groups (n=14)

Length of time	No of parents
Less than 1 month	2
1 to 5 months	3
6 to 11 months	6
12 to 18 months	3

Frequency of attendance (n=14)

Most respondents (11) said that they came to the group 1 or more times a week. The others indicated that they attended nearly every week.

Parents' enjoyment of group (n=16)

Respondents were asked how much they enjoyed the group. Almost all individuals (15) indicated they enjoyed the group "a lot". The remaining respondent did not personally enjoy the group, believing it to be just for her/his child.

Children's perceived enjoyment (n =15)

Respondents were then asked how much they thought their child enjoyed the group. In total, 13 individuals believed that their child enjoyed the group "a lot", whilst 2 replied "a little". Nobody felt that their children did not enjoy the group at all.

Ways in which attending the group has helped respondents

Respondents were asked whether coming to the group had helped them in a number of different ways. Table 3 below shows the number of respondents who had been helped in each of the ways.

Table 3: Benefits of attending group (Frequency)

	Friday Friends (n=7)	Bumps & Babes (n=3)	Stay & Play (n=6)	Total (n = 16)
Making friends	5	2	4	11
Gain health advice	2	2	3	7
Given you parenting info	3	3	3	9
Solved a problem	0	1	3	4
Given you knowledge of other services	5	1	5	11
Other	2	1	1	4

The results showed that overall the most frequently reported benefits were in relation to making friends and learning about other services. Just over half (9) had also been helped by the parenting advice they received. However, it can be seen from the table that all three of the individuals who completed a questionnaire at the Bumps & Babes group felt they had benefited from the parenting advice they were given.

Furthermore, half of the respondents from the Stay & Play group felt that through their attendance they had been helped to solve a problem. Gaining health advice was also mentioned by half of the respondents from Stay & Play as well as by two of the three who responded from Bumps & Babes.

“Other” ways coming to the group had helped respondents were:-

- Safety procedures (Friday Friends)
- Safety gates (Friday Friends)
- Improve my English (Bumps & Babes)

One respondent from the Stay & Play group wrote s/he had also benefited in a ‘lot more’ ways, but did not elaborate.

Increased awareness of health issues

Respondents were asked whether they had become more aware of a range of health issues since attending the group. Table 4 shows the number of respondents who had become more aware of each issue.

Table 4: Increased awareness of health issues (frequency)

	Friday Friends (n=7)	Bumps & Babes (n=3)	Stay & Play (n=6)	Total (n=16)
Tooth care	2	1	2	5
Safety	4	2	3	9
Breastfeeding	0	2	1	3
First aid	1	0	1	2
Nutrition/diet	0	2	3	5
Play	3	2	4	9
Smoking	0	0	3	3
Other	0	0	1	1

It can be seen from the table that, overall, safety and play were the issues mentioned most frequently by respondents. In addition, an increased awareness of nutrition/diet was reported by two of the three respondents from Bumps & Babes and half of the respondents from Stay & Play. Half of those who completed a questionnaire at Stay & Play also reported an increased awareness of smoking issues. Furthermore, two of the three respondents from Bumps & Babes were now more aware of breastfeeding

issues. Overall, first aid was the issue mentioned the least. The one respondent who answered “other” did not give any further details

Views about the usefulness of the health information/advice received at the group (n=15)

The majority of respondents (9) found the health information/advice received at the group to be “very useful” and approximately a quarter (4) felt it was “quite useful”. Only 2 individuals considered the information to be “not that useful”. A breakdown of the results by group is provided in the table below.

Table 5: Usefulness of the health information/advice received (frequency)

	Friday Friends (n=6)	Bumps & Babes (n=3)	Stay & Play (n=6)	Total (n=15)
Very useful	3	3	3	9
Quite useful	2	0	2	4
Not that useful	1	0	1	2

Information respondents found most useful

Respondents were asked what information had been most useful to them as parents. In total 11 out of the 16 respondents answered this question, of which several wrote “all information given” or “all of it”. The other answers given were:-

- Encourage play (Friday Friends)
- Health and food information (Friday Friends)
- Reading with your child at early age (Friday Friends)
- Weaning info, food labelling (Bumps & Babes)
- Breastfeeding, labour (Bumps & Babes)
- Safety (Stay & Play)
- Play i.e. how to use things lying around the house (Stay & Play)
- Being able to use library bus (Stay & Play)
- Dual language, toilet training, health library (Stay & Play)

Information respondents found least useful

Respondents were then asked what information had been least useful to them as parents. Two individuals wrote “none”, whilst the remaining 14 simply left this question blank.

How easy do respondents feel it is to ask Sure Start staff for advice or information? (n=16)

All respondents felt it was “very easy” (11) or “easy” (5) to ask Sure Start staff for advice or information. Comments included:

“I feel comfortable asking staff anything”

“They are very understanding”.

“I feel very good that I can come down and ask for advice. The staff are really nice and easy to talk to”.

Have respondents done anything new or differently with their child(ren) at home as a result of what has been learnt at the group?

Overall, 12 respondents indicated they had done something new or differently with their child(ren) at home as a result of attending the group and most gave further

details. Nearly half (5) mentioned trying new/different play activities or doing more creative things with their child(ren) such as painting and drawing. One said:-

“From ideas from leaflets at the bungalow we’ve spent ages playing with large trays of rice & flour.”

A couple of respondents also reported doing baby massage at home. Other changes reported included:-

- Put him to sleep on his side with blanket back.
- Food colouring, I put it in the bath and the kids love it. We do loads more things at home now.
- Books.
- Sometimes encourage more fruit as a snack.

At the end of the questionnaire respondents were asked whether they had any other comments. The comments given included:

I'm very satisfied with this group.

(Bumps & Babes)

I really enjoy coming. I meet different people and get to know a lot.

(Bumps & Babes)

The staff are really good and nice.

(Stay & Play)

Very useful to come and learn new things.

(Stay & Play)

Appendix 7: Home Safety Equipment Scheme – Telephone interviews

A total of 24 parents were interviewed over the telephone with regard to the safety equipment scheme. Fifteen of the parents interviewed had one child, six had two children, two had three children and one had 5 children. Ages of children ranged from one month to nine years old, with most of the children aged around two years.

Have parents used the safety gates?

All respondents apart from one had used the safety gates. The majority of the parents (17) had two safety gates fitted, two parents had three gates and 4 parents had one gate fitted (including one parent that had ordered a second). The majority of the safety gates had been fitted on stairs and kitchen doors. The parent that was yet to use the equipment said that she had already got two gates fitted and would use them when her child (9 months old) was older.

Are the safety gates easy to use?

The vast majority of the parents (22) said that the gates were easy to use, including one parent who commented that they were better than the other gates that she had used. One parent commented that while she now found the gates easy to use, they had been “At first a bit stiff if you have a child in your hand”. Another parent noted that her children could open the gates. Two parents had not found the gates easy to use – one parent said that the gates were “not too good – tight to open” while the other described how she “had to climb over, not easy at all”.

Have safety gates made a difference to the safety of the home?

The vast majority of the parents (22) felt that the gates had made a positive difference to the safety of their home, helping to keep children away from potentially dangerous areas such as the kitchen and stairs. A few parents specifically commented on the greater confidence and ‘peace of mind’ that they now felt in the safety of their home and the greater freedom they now felt able to give their child. Comments included:

“Totally made a difference – no concern on the stairs.”

“A lot, 100%, super.”

“A lot because it gave peace of mind with child on stairs.”

“A lot – can’t get to dangerous stuff in the kitchen – they are fab.”

“100% difference – could not roam freely before.”

“Very. Have more confidence and can let daughter get on and play.”

The parent who was yet to use the gates envisaged that they would make a “big difference” to the safety of her home when her child was older.

One parent felt that the gates had not made her home much safer as her children were able to climb over them.

How did parents find the ordering system?

All the parents expressed satisfaction with the ordering system. Apart from one parent who spoke of experiencing a slight delay due to a staff member leaving, no other problems were reported. One parent commented on the swift fitting of the safety gates in her home:

“Very good, excellent. Filled out form on Friday and they were fitted by the Wednesday.”

Other positive comments included: *“Fantastic”, “Very polite”*.

One parent commented that she would have liked to have been able to pay over the telephone.

What did parents feel about the length of time it took for the gates to be fitted after they had been ordered?

The majority of the parents said that they had not had to wait long between the time they ordered the gates and when they were delivered/fitted. One parent commented:

“Short process – quick and efficient – good explanations.”

Three respondents said that they had experienced a delay in receiving the gates.

Three of the parents fitted the safety gates themselves.

Do parents have any suggestions as to how the service could be improved?

The majority of the parents had no suggestions for improvements, with many expressing satisfaction with the current service:

“Good as it is”, “Very happy with it”, “No, really good gates – happy with service”.

A few respondents did make suggestions. These included:

“Publicity could be improved – I heard by word of mouth”

“Maybe a little more known about the service that is available”

“Less swingy gates”

“Padlocks so 4 year olds can’t open them”

“Maybe that the time of fitting could be more specific”

“Payment on delivery would be better”

“That more than one person could be responsible for overseeing the service so if one person is off, nobody would have to wait too long”.

Any further comments from parents?

Most of the parents had no further comments to make. One parent commented that she would also like to have finger guards for doors.

Other comments that were made included:

“The gates are much cheaper than in the shops”.

“The fitter was friendly and made sure everything was OK and gave instructions”.

“It is brilliant – just like the rest of Sure Start”

“Very well appreciated – very valued service”.

Appendix 8: Play and Learning Team - parent questionnaires

The Play and Learning Team sought the opinions of parents at three groups: Friday Friends, Stay and Play and the Thursday Play Session held at Beulah Hall.

Nine questionnaires were completed. Parents were asked two questions:

- Why do you come to this group?
- What do you like about it?

Why do you come to this group?

The opportunity to socialise and mix with others (for both themselves and their children) was the principal reason given by parents for coming to the group.

Comments included:

"I come to the groups so that my kids can play with other kids and I can talk to other mums."

"For my kids to play and interact and enjoy time with other kids."

"For my son and myself to mix with the other families."

Other reasons for attending the group included:

- Daughter getting "stimulation from playing and making things." (one parent)
- Being provided with information on different issues. (one parent)
- Good location / near to home (three parents)
- Convenient time (one parent)

What do you like about it?

Being able to participate in a range of activities and children having the opportunity to play and learn was mentioned by a number of parents. Comments included:

"Watching my little girl learning new skills and being able to choose from a wide range of activities."

"That the kids have got freedom to play".

One parent noted that the group is "friendly" while another said that she benefited from having an adult conversation and the chance to discuss any worries that she may have about her child.

The staff running the group were mentioned by a few parents. Comments included:

"Very organised, friendly staff. Very welcoming and helpful."

"All the workers are really friendly and approachable."

Other aspects of the group that parents said they liked included:

- "The room is nice and big"
- "You get fruit and a drink"
- "Storytime"

Appendix 9: A selection of key findings from the Quality Assurance and Safe Practice Audit

Quality Assurance & Safe Practice Audit

SURE START – MELLOW VALLEY

Northern Region

Audit undertaken on Thursday 29th / Friday 30th September 2005

Lead Auditor: Paul Blakey
Quality Assurance & Development Unit

Auditor's Overall Assessment of the Project – Some Key Comments

- Based on evidence collated from this Audit it is clear that this Sure Start programme is effective in meeting the needs of the local community.
- It is very clear that the involvement and work that has taken place with parents since Sure Start Mellow Valley was established is an excellent model of local ownership and involvement.
- As part of the Audit process the Quality and Safe Practice Manager was able to talk with a group of 6 parents from each of the three areas. This meeting highlighted how well established and respected the programme is within the area.
- It is commendable that Sure Start Mellow Valley has continued to provide effective and high quality services to the three areas at a time when a well-established Programme Manager had recently left.
- Generally 'recording' within the project is good particularly the systems used for Family files. It is acknowledged by the staff team that the recording for group work could be made better.
- Very positive work has been undertaken to ensure that the three areas (Little London, Meanwood, and Woodhouse) are provided with an equitable service. Considering the diverse nature of these communities this will continue to present challenges for the programme.
- In conclusion Sure Start Mellow Valley is presently an effective programme that provides quality services within a framework and foundation of safe practice.

How does the work of the project make a difference to the lives of young people

The feedback received from stakeholders, particularly parents, confirmed that the project was held in high regard. 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. This involvement has helped the programme achieve key outcomes as it means the programme delivers services that are wanted. This reinforces the trust parents have in Sure Start and the feeling that they are listened to. It is acknowledged that due to the diverse spread of the 3 geographical regions the 'reach' of the programme is presented with many challenges. The staff and management board are very aware of these issues and is a priority within the future agenda. A further example of how the Sure Start has made a difference to the lives of young people/parents/carers is in the extensive work undertaken in challenging decisions/plans relating to library provision, and the influence it has had in enabling access to books/computers in areas where library provision had previously been cut back.

Key strengths included:

- Very strong parent/carer involvement
- Management Board strength in parent partnership
- Positive opportunities for parents to contribute to the development of services
- Effective recording systems in place for family files
- Staff very clear on the need for effective recording
- Effectiveness with which project collects/collates statistical data in relation to evidencing the achievement of Sure Start Targets
- Safer care maintains a very high profile within the programme
- Staff group are very aware of how to manage Child Protection issues
- Programme staff work hard to ensure that the needs of the diverse communities within the 3 geographical areas are represented in the services on offer.
- The programme has been outstanding in the involvement of parents/carers
- Evidence of effective partnership working with other agencies
- Effective lobbying work in relation to Library work
- Member of Leeds Sure Start partnership & Extended Schools sub-group
- Positive working relationships with external agencies
- Effective administrative support within the programme
- Effective management of anxieties relating to transfer to children's centre
- Successful registration with OFSTED for two sites within the programme
- Good application of risk management relating to home visits.
- Strong sense of commitment on the part of staff to the aims/objectives of the programme
- Staff have successfully worked in a way which has maintained the momentum from when the previous Programme Manager left the organisation
- Training opportunities are displayed clearly on the staff notice-board
- Comprehensive induction file in place for all new staff
- Initiated 'in-house' training for staff in Child protection

Areas for improvement included:

- Consider how to further meet the needs of 'hard to reach' families, including refugee and asylum seeking children, and also being more accessible to children with disabilities
- Consider more effective ways to record group sessions – this should identify clear aims and objectives, indication of content of session, issues arising, learning points for consideration/follow up at next sessions
- Explore effective ways in which appropriate information is shared between the staff group
- Endeavour to maintain and develop a team of staff that have a broad range of skills and experience. It may also be beneficial if potential staff/volunteers/sessionals could be recruited from ethnic minority groups. This might also be the case for trying to attract male staff.
- Continue to monitor the staffing situation in relation to 'acting up positions' and 'part-time' staff to ensure the programme is delivered according to the plan
- Consider ways in which the challenges of managing a 'mainly' part-time staff team can be shared (understood) by the whole staff team.
- Ensure that the demand for services on particular days/times of day can be effectively met by available staff (balanced provision)
- Enable all staff (not just the staff who work in the registered facilities) to fully understand the OFSTED requirements for continued registration. This may help to improve, even more, the high standards throughout the Sure Start programme as a whole.

Recommendations included:

- Further work should be undertaken to consider ways in which 'hard to reach' families can be better facilitated to access the services on offer.
- Staff should work together to consider more effective ways to record group work. This should be linked to the objectives and purpose of the work.
- For the project, in conjunction with the Region, to ensure that all staff have attended TCS Child Protection Training
- Ensure clarity in relation to all aspects of seconded staff appointments. (Vetting- CRB – Training needs – supervision and support requirements/arrangements) This may be by way of protocols.
- Confirm the staff groups understanding of the framework whereby 'information sharing' is necessary, internally and externally (To the Sure Start Mellow Valley programme)
- Ensure a system is in place to monitor the equity of delivery between the three areas. This system should enable restorative action to be taken if inequalities are found to exist.
- Endeavour to consider ways to attract potential recruits (staff and volunteers) that reflect the local communities served.
- For the project, in conjunction with the Region, to continue to do what it can to influence the governance arrangements for Children's Centres locally in order that the focus on parent/community led services is not lost.
- Continue to monitor the staffing situation in relation to 'acting up positions' and 'part-time' staff to ensure the programme is delivered according to the plan.
- Consider ways in which the challenges of managing a 'mainly' part-time staff team can be shared (understood) by the whole staff team.
- Ensure that the demand for services on particular days/times of day can be effectively met by available staff (balanced provision).
- Enable all staff (not just the staff who work in the registered facilities) to fully understand the OFSTED requirements for continued registration. This may help to improve, even more, the high standards throughout the Sure Start programme as a whole.
- It is necessary to ensure that formal supervision takes place on a regular basis for all staff – child protection and safe care should be a standing agenda item in these meetings
- Ensure the processes for the performance reviews are established asap. This should include ensuring staff fully understand the process.