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Centre for Public Health Research

Sure Start Blacon

Reach Report

April 2004 – March 2005

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March 2006

Acknowledgements

The data monitoring requirements for Sure Start programmes are extensive. This report was possible because of the efforts of a large number of people involved the data gathering process. We would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of:

- the Sure Start Blacon Finance Officer and the Programme Administrator for their continued efforts in managing and maintaining the MCA database at Sure Start Blacon;

- John Zlosnik, Senior Lecturer in Computer Science and Information Systems, and Servel Miller, research student in the Department of Geography at the University of Chester for their support and assistance.

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Executive summary

Sure Start local programmes are required by the Sure Start Unit to keep records of all service activity relating to the use of Sure Start services and personal information on all families registered with the programme. At Sure Start Blacon, this information is held on an MCA database.

The purpose of this study was to conduct an interrogation of this information to establish the 'reach' of the local programme across Blacon. The timeframe selected for the analysis was 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005. In addition to the overall presentation of reach, the report also looks at the use of a number of core services in more detail and gives a geographical perspective on engagement. The key findings are summarised below.

- Almost two thirds (64%) of all eligible families in Blacon accessed Sure Start services during the 12-month period.

- Parents, carers and children who were new to the Sure Start programme made up 40% of the service users during the year.

- Approximately one fifth (205) of the people who had contact with the programme had done so on just one occasion whilst a similar number (216) had contact 20 or more times.

- The ratio of contacts with children and adults altered during the 12 months and by March 2005 the majority of contacts (61%) were with children.

- The month that the largest number of children accessed Sure Start Blacon services was January 2005 when the database shows that 23% of eligible children were seen by the programme.

- Sure Start Blacon users included lone parent families, teenage parents and parents with a disability.

- The majority of adults who accessed Sure Start Blacon services or received support from staff were mothers.

- The largest age group of parents or carers who accessed Sure Start Blacon services were between 20 and 24 years old.

- Just over a quarter of the families who had contact with Sure Start Blacon during the year had used six or more different services. In contrast, 29% of families had accessed one service.

- The most frequently used service was the one-to-one support with a Sure Start worker, accounting for 18% of all contacts with the programme during the year. This was also the service with the most dispersed geographical reach, possibly because it usually took place at the individual's home.

- The postcode area of Blacon where the greatest number of service users came from was CH1 5D, to the north of Blacon. This area also contained the largest number of families with children under four years old. The highest proportion of eligible families in one postcode area to access services lived in the CH1 5R area to the south.

- The GIS programme helped create a visual picture of reach. For those people who have attended services, the maps do not appear to demonstrate the overriding importance of the 'pram pushing distance' as families from outside this radius frequently attend the activities. It is impossible to say, however, the extent to which distance has been a factor for those families who do not attend.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1   Background

Sure Start is a major government policy initiative focused on families living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Its aim is to improve the health, well-being and life chances of children under four years old and their families, through the provision of integrated early education, childcare, family and health support. Sure Start local programmes work with a geographically defined population of families with young children, typically areas encompassing between 700 and 900 families.

Sure Start is based on the understanding that early contact between families, children and services can be beneficial in addressing a range of difficulties before they manifest themselves as significant social, educational or health problems. Local programmes were thus encouraged to innovate with new models of service delivery that would be more successful in engaging families, particularly those defined as 'hard to reach' or 'excluded'. This report focuses on the issue of programme reach, which can be used as an indicator of how successful the local programme has been in engaging local families.

Guidance from the Sure Start Unit suggests that local programmes should see an increasing number of children and families in the first year until they are in contact with every family with children under four years old in their area. The expectation is that a fully operational programme sees between a third and a quarter of all children aged nought to three years living in their area each month, including a 'steady' number (around 20%) of children who have never been in touch with the programme before (Sure Start Unit, 2002). To facilitate access, the Sure Start Unit has stated that, where possible, Sure Start services should be available within pram-pushing distance from families' homes, a maximum of 800 metres (Sure Start, 2001).

Sure Start local programmes are required by the Sure Start Unit to keep records of the children and families accessing Sure Start and their use of services. At Sure Start Blacon, this information is held on the MCA database. This study used the data on the MCA database to describe patterns of registration and service usage in relation to key variables. The analysis was enhanced by the use of ArcView, a

geographical information system (GIS) that enabled the spatial presentation of this information. However, only the families with complete postcode data on the database could be plotted on maps of the area.

In order to assess the reach of the Sure Start local programme and individual services, the following categories have been used:

- eligible and registered families;
- families using services;
- contacts of individuals with services;
- the use of services by various groups of people, sometimes defined as 'hard-to-reach' such as lone parents, teenage parents, fathers, people from ethnic minority groups, and, people with disabilities;
- postcode data to locate families within the designated geographical area.

1.2   Aims and objectives

The aim of this report was to establish the reach of the programme in the Sure Start Blacon area. This has been done through the exploration of the number of people who have accessed services, the social characteristics of service users and the geographical area in which service users lived. This analysis will provide an indicator of the success of the programme in engaging the eligible population in the Sure Start Blacon area and may help to inform future service development. A 12-month period (1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005) of data was interrogated.

The main objectives of the study were to:

- identify the proportion of eligible families and children who were registered with the programme;
- investigate the number of families using services;
- explore the frequency of service use;
- interrogate postcode data against information on service usage in order to map the geographical reach of each service;
- explore the use of services by groups of people defined as 'hard to reach';
- explore the 'pram-pushing' distance to Sure Start Blacon services, in order to understand families' access to Sure Start activities.

1.3 Methodology

This was a quantitative study which involved the analysis of routinely collected monitoring information held on the MCA database. A range of computer programmes were used to interrogate and analyse the reach of Sure Start Blacon and the individual services which the programme delivered over an identified time frame. This involved working closely with members of the Sure Start team who manage and maintain the database, as well as collaboration with the Computer Science and Information Systems Department and the Geography Department at the University of Chester. Additional information on the number of eligible families in the Blacon area was retrieved from the Child Health Database.

The time frame for this study, 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005, was selected for two reasons. Prior to April 2004, the local programme had experienced difficulties with the operational aspects of the database, resulting in concerns about the accuracy of the data held on the system. MCA database training was then undertaken which has resulted in a more rigorous system of monitoring, and, as a consequence, greater confidence in the validity of the data entered from April 2004 onwards. A 12-month period was selected to capture any seasonal fluctuations in service usage.

1.3.1 Data cleaning

Prior to analysis, a two-phased data cleaning process was carried out to ensure the dataset was free of errors. Phase one of this process involved staff from the local programme checking the database for duplicates, and any other entries which appeared incorrect when compared with other records or local knowledge. The database was then copied (removing names and addresses of families), and exported to Microsoft Excel. Phase two of the data cleaning process was carried out by the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR). It was necessary to run several queries on the data to identify further errors. Several issues were uncovered as a result of this process, for example, fathers and sons who were recorded as female and multiple categories of the same postcode as a result of extra spaces or the inappropriate use of lower case letters. Wherever possible, issues were identified, corrected and saved on the data file to ensure the highest degree of accuracy possible at the point of analysis.

1.4 Research ethics

Ethical approval for this study was granted by South Cheshire Local Research Ethics Committee (LREC) in December 2003.

1.5   Structure of the report

This report now moves on to discuss the findings of the reach analysis. Chapter 2 presents a profile of service users over the 12-month period and Chapter 3 looks more specifically at the use of particular services and the number of contacts by parents and carers according to a number of personal characteristics. Chapter 4 discusses the findings in respect of the programme's reach and identifies a number of data collection and processing issues.

Chapter 2
A profile of service users

2.1   Introduction

This chapter examines the overall reach of the programme. It highlights the number of eligible families in the Sure Start Blacon area and compares this with those who have accessed services during the 12-month period. It then presents a profile of the different groups of people who have accessed Sure Start Blacon.

2.2   Eligible, registered and archived families

The terms eligible, registered, and archived families are used in this report. Eligible families are all families living in the CH1 5 area with children under four years old during the twelve month period. There were 866 eligible children living in 741 families recorded on the Child Health Database. Registered families are those on the MCA database who may or may not have used Sure Start services. Archived families are those listed on the database whose children have reached the age of four during the course of this 12-month period.

During the 12-month period from 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005, the database identified 1,046 registered service users, within 477 families (including 12 archived individuals, within six families). These figures suggest that, allowing for babies who will have been born during the year and children reaching four years old, almost two thirds (64%) of the 741 eligible families living in the area accessed Sure Start Blacon during the 12-month period.

By utilising GIS it was possible to plot, onto a map of Blacon, the postcodes of all families on the Child Health Database and those who have accessed services over the previous 12 months. This generates a visual picture of the areas reached by the local programme. As the Child Health Database is based on children and not families, multiple children in one household on the Sure Start database were removed to produce comparable figures. Figure 2.2.1 shows the distribution of eligible children across Blacon and Figure 2.2.2 shows the distribution of families accessing Sure Start services. Putting the two maps together, it is possible to see that service users are spread throughout the area in a similar pattern to eligible families and that there are not large areas without any users.
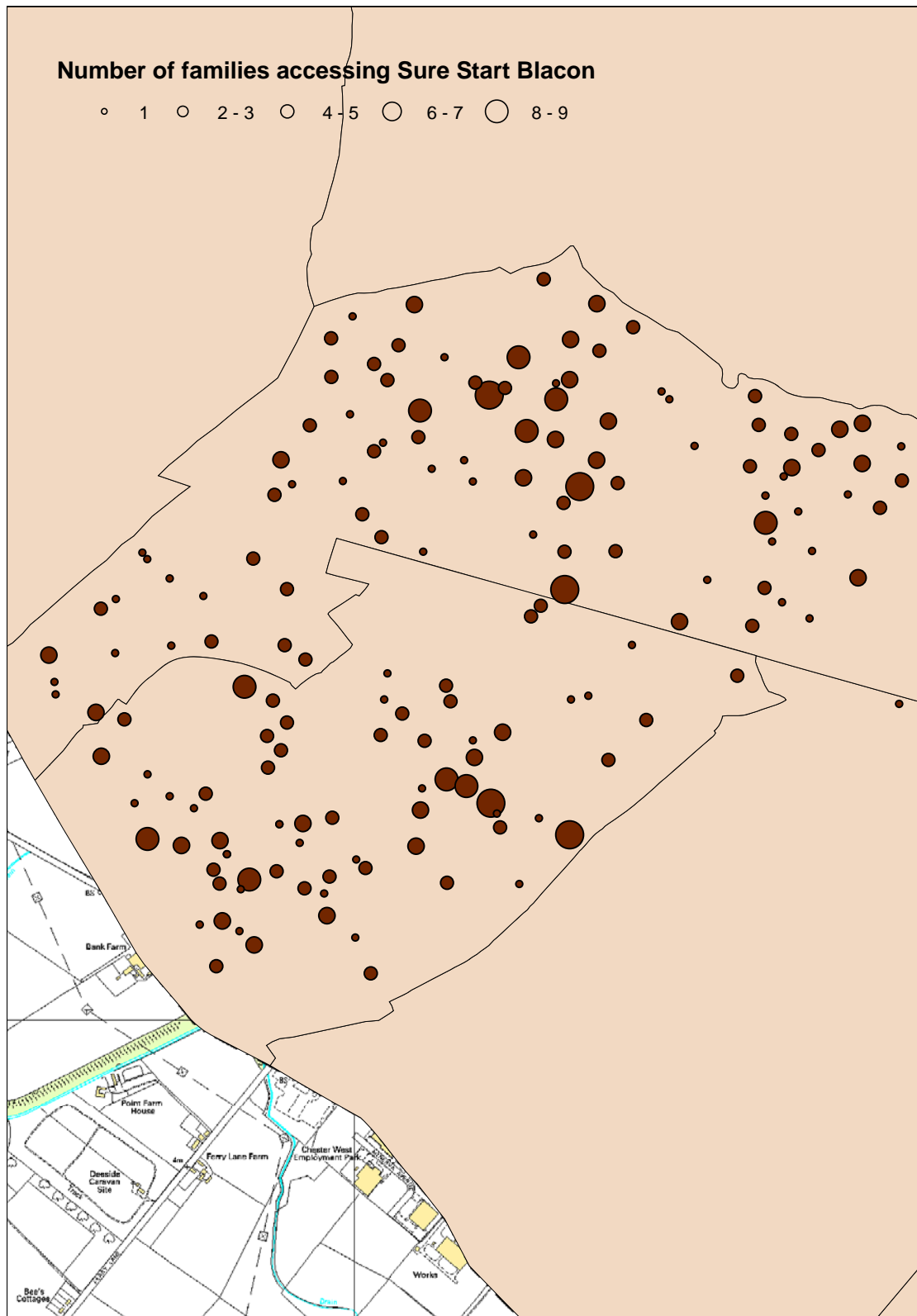
Figure 2.2.1 Eligible families by postcode
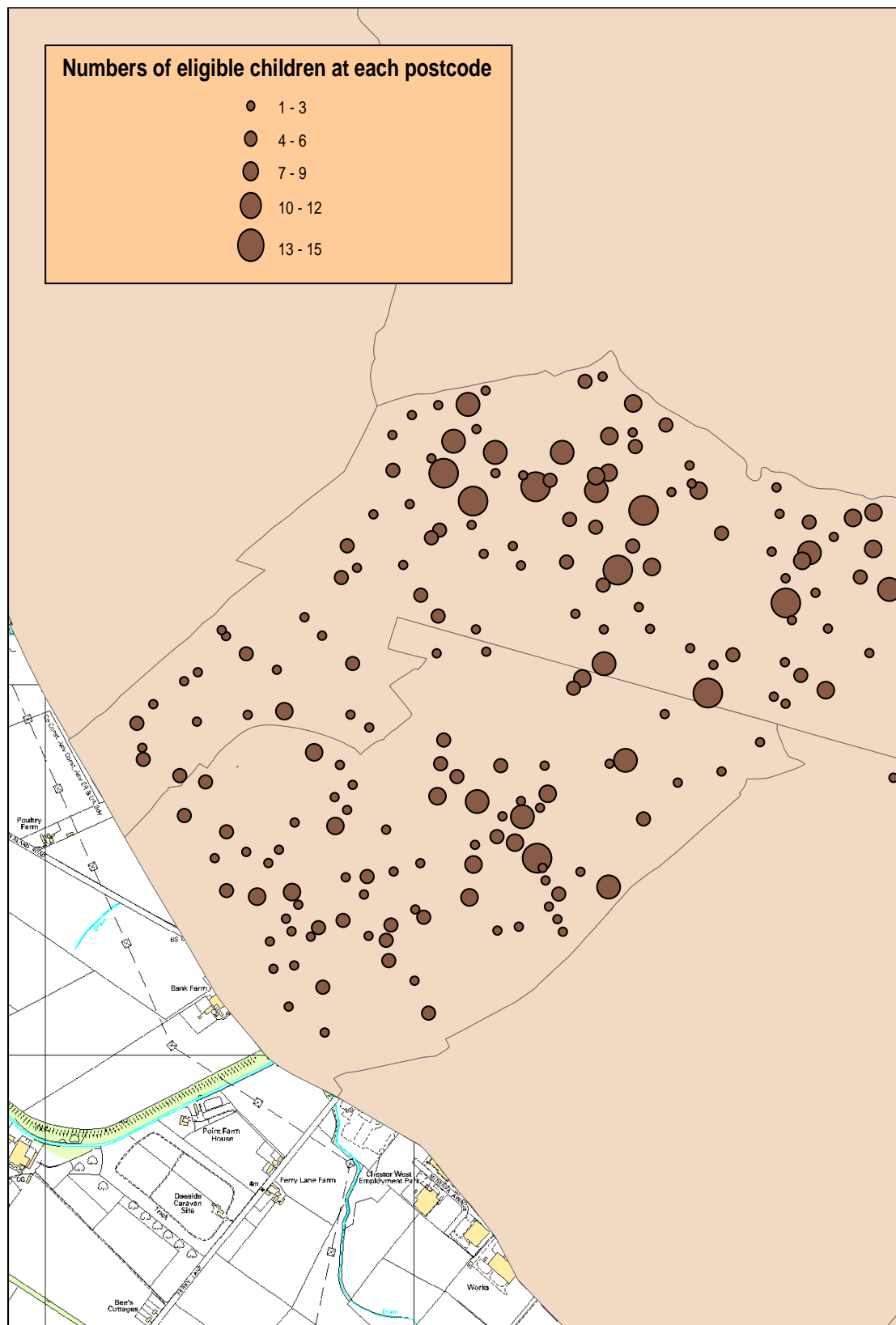
Numbers of eligible children at each postcode

- 1 - 3
- 4 - 6
- 7 - 9
- 10 - 12
- 13 - 15

Figure 2.2.2 Families accessing Sure Start Blacon

2.3   New service users

Registrations and contacts with individuals are recorded on the database as 'new' or 'existing': this enables the programme to identify the number of new families or individuals using services each month or year. However, a limitation of the MCA database is that it does not have a field for recording a person's date of registration but simply records the date that an individual or family was entered onto the system. It is not possible, therefore, to calculate exactly the number of new registrations and new service users each month as programme staff enter new records in bulk rather than at the time of registration. As a result, some caution should be taken when interpreting the figures between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005 which show that there were:

- 285 existing families who used services, containing 627 existing individuals;
- 192 new families containing 419 individuals who first accessed services during the year.

These figures show that during the year, 40% of families were new to the programme. This equates to an average of 16 families, or 35 individuals each month.

2.4   Service use by different groups

Patterns of service use can be examined according to personal characteristics which are collected when an individual registers with the Sure Start programme. Some of the figures presented below, however, will represent an underestimate of the number of people in these categories because data was missing from the registration form (either because families had opted not to give this information, or it had not been requested or recorded).

2.4.1   Family position

Table 2.4.1.1 illustrates the breakdown of service users by family position: it shows that 97% of the people accessing services were mothers, fathers, daughters and sons. The data field relating to family position was completed for all except six (less than 1%) of the people recorded on the database.

Table 2.4.1.1 Family position of service users

Family position	Number	%
Mother	405	39
Daughter	278	27
Son	255	24
Father	72	7
Grandmother	13	1
Granddaughter	6	<1
Aunt	4	<1
Grandson	2	<1
Niece	2	<1
Carer	1	<1
Step-father	1	<1
Uncle	1	<1
Unknown	6	<1
Total	**1,046**	**100**

2.4.2 Lone parents

A total of 58 lone parents accessed Sure Start Blacon services during the 12 months: this represents 12% of all parents/carers using services. All of the lone parents were mothers, seven were teenage mothers and one was disabled.

2.4.3 Parents with a disability

During the year from 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005, seven disabled parents accessed services: this represents less than 1% of all parents/carers. Six of these parents were mothers and one was a father. There were no disabled children recorded on the database.

2.4.4 Teenage parents

For the purpose of this analysis, a 'teenage parent' was taken to be any parent aged 19 years and under on 31st March 2005. This may be an underestimate of teenage parents registered with Sure Start Blacon as there were 56 (11%) parents whose date of birth had not been entered onto the database. The available figures show that:

- 28 teenage parents had accessed a service – this represents 6% of all parents/ carers who had used a service during this period;

- 27 of the teenage parents were mothers and one was a father;
- seven (25%) were lone parents;
- the youngest teenage mother was 16 years old.

2.4.5   Sex

The sex of the adults and children accessing services was recorded for all but one person. The males accessing services included fathers, step-fathers, uncles, sons, and grandsons whilst the females included mothers, grandmothers, carers, aunts, daughters, granddaughters, and nieces:

- 68% (710) of the people accessing services were female;
- 335 males, 32% of all users, accessed Sure Start Blacon services;
- two of the 74 adult males using services were not fathers;
- 17 of the 422 adult females using services were not mothers.

2.4.6   Age

The age of each person on the MCA database is recorded in years, months and days. For the purpose of analysis, 'age in years' has been used. The ages of 70 (7%) people who had accessed services were not recorded. Table 2.4.6.1 illustrates the age of those people who accessed services between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005.

Table 2.4.6.1 Age of service users

Age group (years)	Number	%
Under 1	98	9
1 – 3	253	24
4 – 9	163	16
10 – 14	13	1
15 – 19	32	3
20 – 24	119	11
25 – 29	104	10
30 – 34	102	10
35 – 39	62	6
40 – 44	25	2
45 and over	5	<1
Unknown	70	7
Total	**1,046**	**100**

2.4.7 Ethnicity

Table 2.4.7.1 illustrates the ethnicity of Sure Start Blacon service users. Taking away the 99 individuals whose ethnic group was unknown, the figures show that 95% of those who attended a Sure Start activity were 'White British'.   This is representative of an area such as Blacon where 98% of residents are of White British origin (Cheshire County Council, 2005).   A total of 18 adults and children of mixed race and non-white ethnic groups used Sure Start Blacon services during the year.

Table 2.4.7.1 Ethnicity of service users

Ethnic group	Number	%
White British	895	86
White Irish	6	<1
White Other	28	3
Mixed white and black (Caribbean)	2	<1
Mixed white and black (African)	5	<1
Mixed other	2	<1
Chinese	2	<1
Black other	4	<1
Asian other	1	<1
Any other ethnic group	2	<1
Not recorded	99	9
Total	**1,046**	**100**

2.4.8 Children

The Sure Start Unit advises that a fully operational programme should see between a third and a quarter of all children aged nought to three years living in their area each month (Sure Start Unit, 2002).   Table 2.4.8.1 illustrates that whilst there has been a general upward trend in the numbers of children seen throughout the year, data from the MCA suggests that Sure Start Blacon had contact with between 12% and 23% of the eligible children aged under four years each month.   These figures show registered children attending services calculated against the 866 children eligible for Sure Start Blacon services in March 2005.

Table 2.4.8.1 Children under four years old accessing services each month

Month	Number	% of eligible users
April	102	12
May	112	13
June	113	13
July	107	12
August	120	14
September	139	16
October	131	15
November	144	17
December	143	17
January	202	23
February	150	17
March	191	22

2.5   Activity use by postcode area

This section explores the use of Sure Start activities by the postcode of each family who has accessed a service. This produces a geographical picture of the areas that Sure Start Blacon has reached. Excluded from this analysis are 34 families who had used services but for whom only partial postcodes were recorded on the MCA database (31 families) or who lived outside the Blacon Sure Start area.

The database listed 170 different postcodes, which fell into 16 different areas[1]. Figure 2.5.1 shows the postcode areas within the Sure Start Blacon catchment area.

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[1] For the purpose of this analysis an 'area' was determined by the letter preceding the final letter in a complete postcode. For example, the postcode CH1 5AG would be in area CH1 5A.

Figure 2.5.1 Postcode areas

In looking at the number of families from particular postcode areas who have accessed a service, it is also important to consider the number of families with children under the age of four years who live there. Figure 2.5.2 shows, for each postcode area, both the number of eligible families and those who have accessed services. It shows that although the highest number of families who have used Sure Start Blacon services came from the CH1 5D area to the north, the highest proportion of families to use services live in the CH1 5R, CH1 5Q and CH1 5S areas to the south. The two postcode areas with a very low number of families who had accessed services actually contain comparatively few families with children under the age of four years.

Figure 2.5.2 Eligible families and families accessing services by postcode area
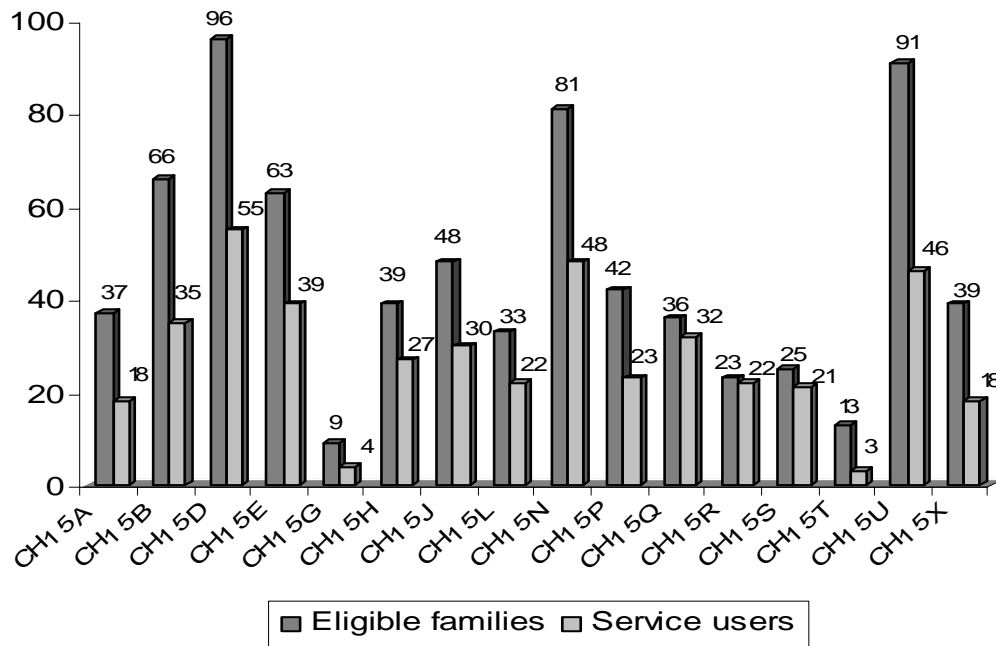
Chapter 3
Patterns of service usage

3.1   Introduction

This chapter explores patterns of service usage amongst those families and individuals who accessed Sure Start Blacon services between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005. It focuses on the total number of contacts with the programme, the services that families have used and how often they have used them. It then looks at the different groups of people who have accessed services during this time.

Sure Start Blacon deliver services from a number of venues and the analysis of the contact data can be extended to look at the contacts at each site and the distance that families have travelled to use the services located there. 'Pram-pushing' distance, which is referred to in the Sure Start literature as being the acceptable walking distance from a person's home to a Sure Start service, is 800 metres. Using GIS, it was possible to chart an 800 metre radius from the Sure Start Blacon venues and show the number of families attending from within and beyond this distance.

Figure 3.1.1 shows the location of the five main venues within Blacon which are used by the Sure Start team to deliver services. The three venues located closely together in the north of Blacon are the Community Centre, Hatton Road Family Centre and the Holy Trinity Church Hall on Norris Road. The three venues located in the south of Blacon are Blacon Library (to the west), Blacon High School Community Wing where the Sure Start team are located, and, Dee Point Mobile (to the south east).

3.2   The overall use of services

Between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005, there were a total of 13,832 contacts with Sure Start Blacon by individuals from 477 families. Further analysis shows that just over half of these contacts were with children:

- 6,531 (47%) of contacts were with adults;
- 7,272 (53%) of contacts were with children;
- in 29 cases (less than 1%) the status of the service user was unknown.

Figure 3.1.1 Service locations
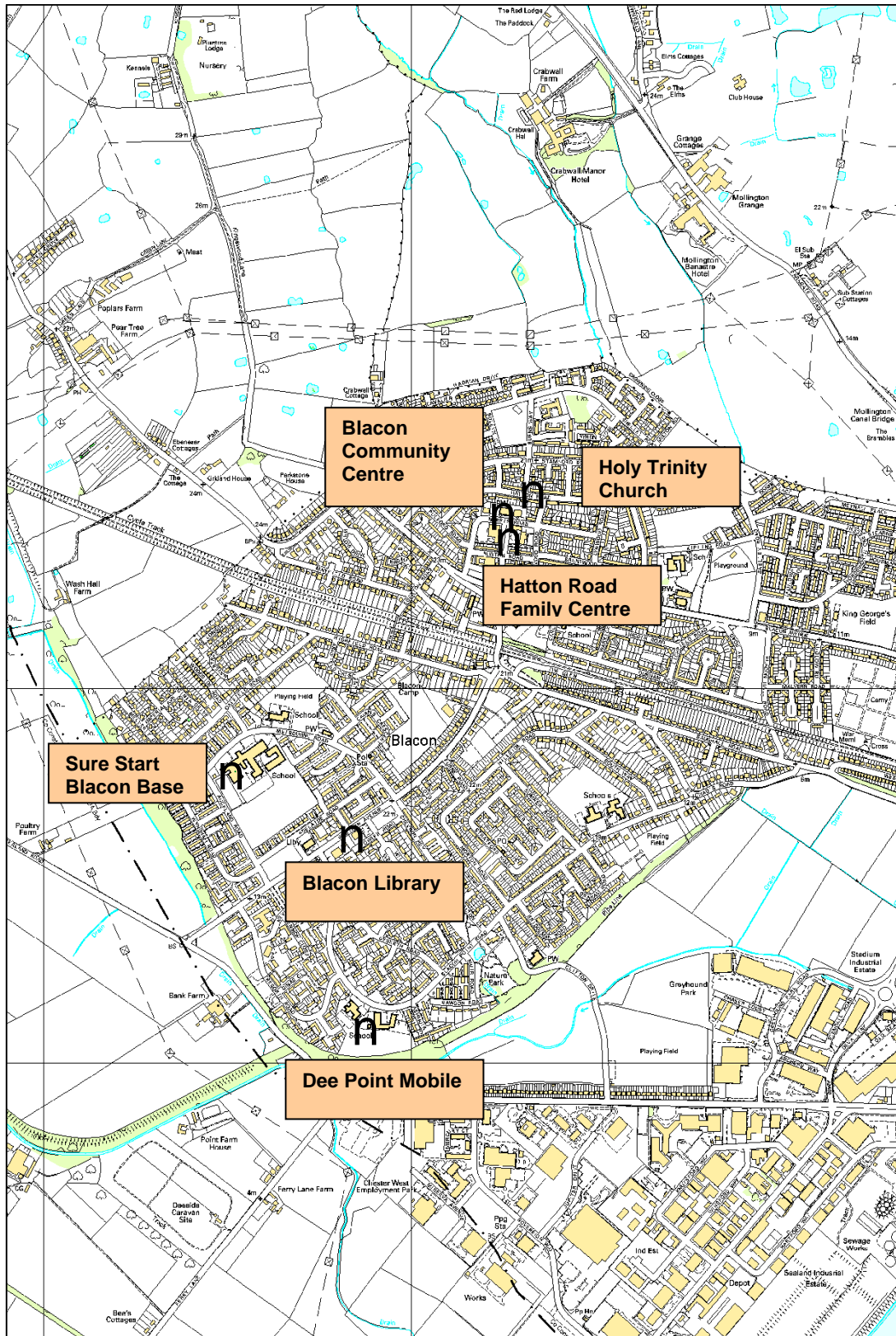
Figure 3.2.1 illustrates the number of contacts each month. It shows that whilst the average number of monthly contacts was 1,153, there was a general increase during the year both in the total number of contacts and in the proportion of contacts that were with children:

- in April 2004, 52% of contacts were with children and 48% were with adults;
- in March 2005, 61% of contacts were with children and 39% were with adults.

Figure 3.2.1 Monthly contacts with children and adults
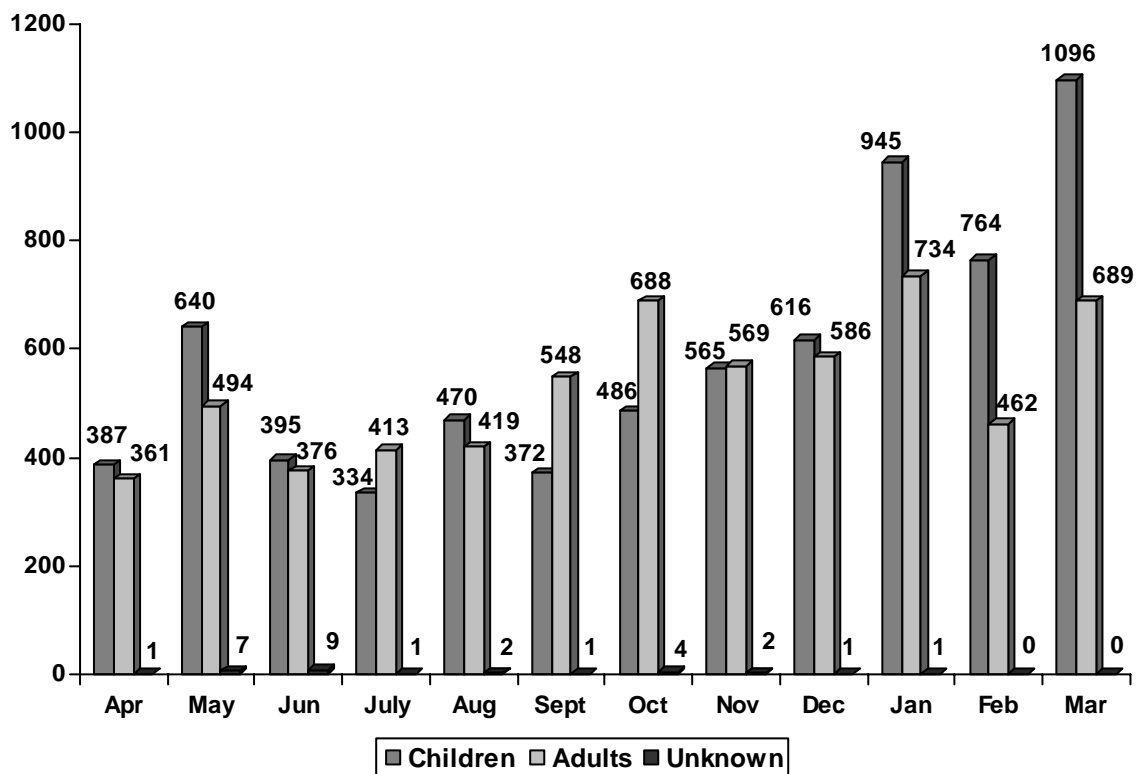
It is also possible to analyse the intensity of use of services by each adult or child who has had contact with Sure Start Blacon. Table 3.2.1 illustrates the number of occasions that each of the 1,046 service users had accessed services provided by the programme during the year. It shows that half of the service users had between one and five contacts with the programme and one fifth of the people who used services did so on just one occasion. At the other end of the spectrum, 5% of service users had 50 or more contacts with the programme during the year.

Table 3.2.1   Number of contacts by each service user

Number of contacts	Number of individuals	Cumulative %
1	205	20
2	116	31
3	70	37
4	65	44
5	52	49
6	52	54
7	36	57
8	25	59
9	23	62
10 – 14	102	71
15 – 19	84	79
20 – 24	49	84
25 – 29	49	89
30 – 34	22	91
35 – 39	21	93
40 – 44	15	94
45 – 49	12	95
50 +	48	100
Total	**1,046**	**100**

An analysis of the number of activities or services that each family has used during the year shows that out of the 477 families who have had contact with Sure Start Blacon, 139 or 29% have used just one service – they may have attended the activity only once or on a number of occasions. As Table 3.2.2 shows, just over half (52%) of the families who have attended an activity have had contact with three or more different services.

Table 3.2.2   Services used by each family

Number of services	Number of families	Cumulative %
1	139	29
2	89	48
3	56	60
4	46	69
5	24	74
6 – 9	82	92
10 +	41	100
Total	**477**	**100**

3.3 The use of individual services

Although many services and activities are recorded on the database, this report looks primarily at the use of eight core services, which were identified by the programme:

- the Drop In;
- Toy Library;
- Bumps and Babes;
- Breastfeeding support (within a group and at home);
- Pre-birth Experience;
- the Pop In;
- Adult education services;
- one-to-one support.

By matching postcode data alongside information relating to service usage, it was possible to determine the numbers of families from each postcode area who had accessed individual services. This was developed further by using GIS to provide a spatial representation of service usage.

NB: The accuracy of the figures presented below is dependent on complete records of attendance having been taken then logged on the MCA: a low number of contacts may be a result of attendance by unregistered service users, under recording and/or low use of the service.

3.3.1 The Drop In

The Drop In operates from a mobile unit located at Dee Point Primary School in Blacon. It is open every Monday from 1.00pm to 2.30pm. This service is primarily run by family support staff and the play development worker, although other staff, such as the volunteer co-ordinator, may also support the session. There were records for the entire 12-month period for this service and they showed that:

- there were 89 contacts (with 80 individuals from 56 families) at the Drop In;
- this equates to an average of seven contacts at the Drop In each month (or less than two contacts per week);
- the majority of the contacts at the Drop In (77%) were with mothers;
- 12% of the families who accessed Sure Start Blacon during the year came to the Drop-in.

Figure 3.3.1.1 illustrates the distribution of the 89 contacts over the 12-month period. The highest number of recorded contacts (22) was in March 2005, a very large increase in contacts from the previous month. There does not appear to be a pattern to the level of attendance although numbers have generally been higher during the spring and autumn. The number of individuals is similar to the number of contacts, indicating that, each month, someone would normally attend on just one occasion.

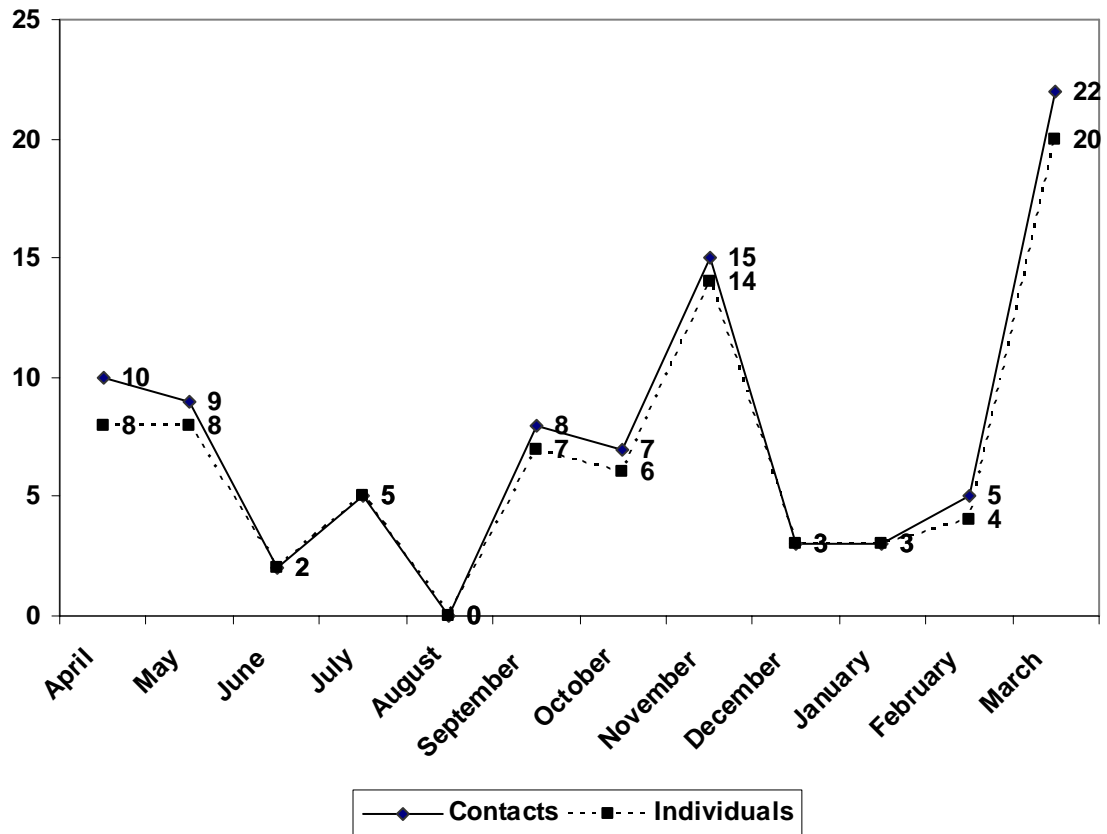**Figure 3.3.1.1   Use of the Drop In: contacts and individuals**

Figure 3.3.1.2 shows the number of contacts and the number of families using the Drop In across the postcode areas. The CH1 5D area, which is to the north of Blacon, was the postcode area from which the highest number of families attended the Drop In (12 families or 21% of contacts).

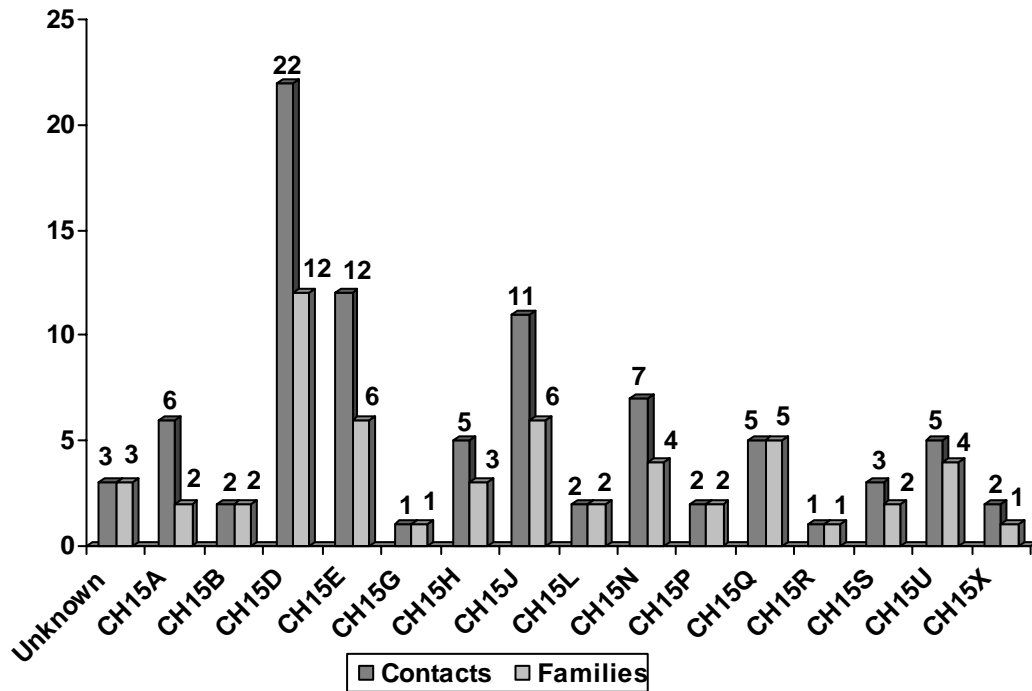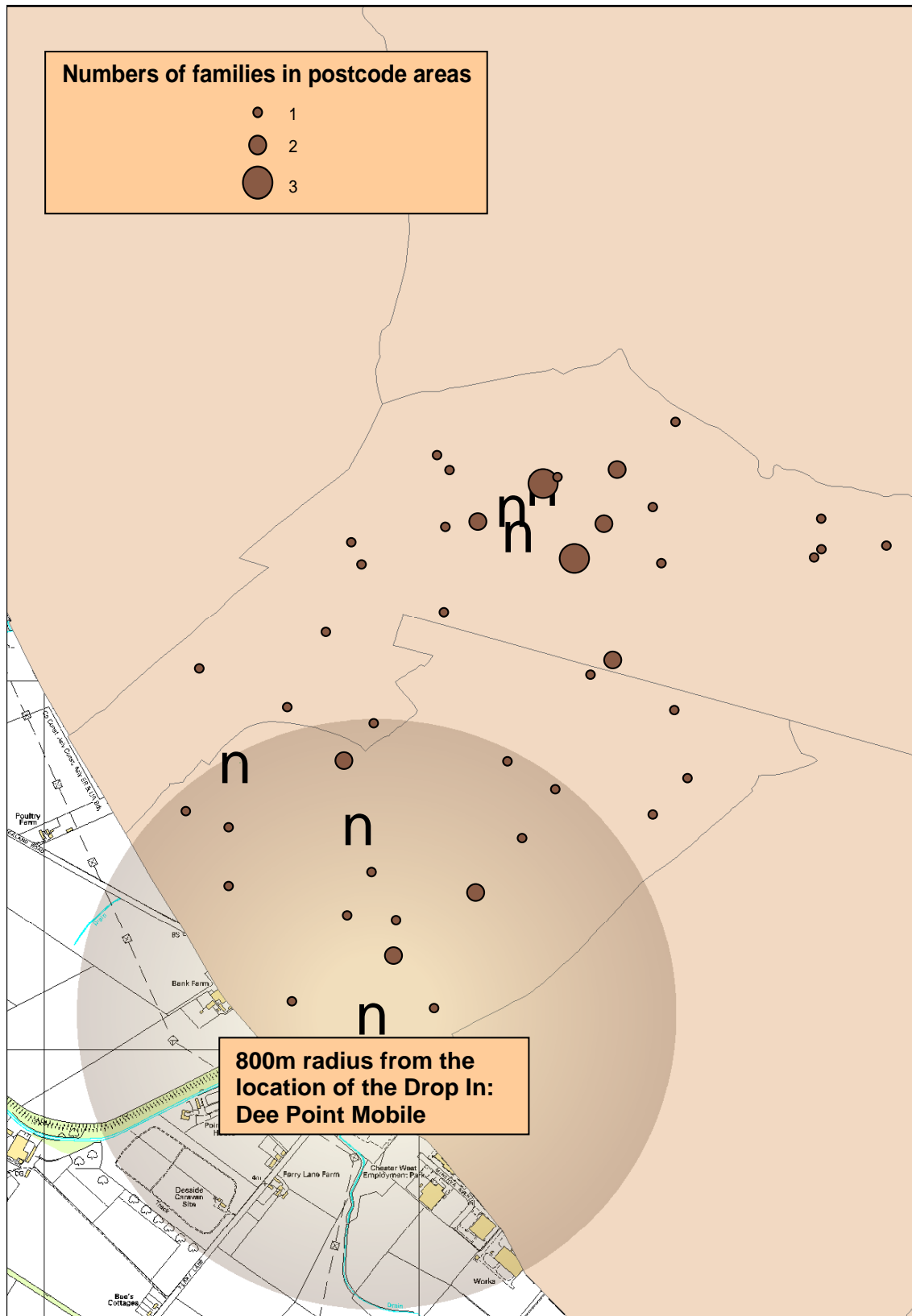**Figure 3.3.1.2 Postcodes of Drop In contacts and families**

Figure 3.3.1.3 shows the geographical distribution of families who have attended the Drop In with graduated circles to represent the numbers of families attending from each postcode area. There appears to have been a greater use of the Drop In amongst families in the north of Blacon although the pram-pushing distance from the Drop In venue (Dee Point Mobile) covers the south. This demonstrates that the majority of those people who have accessed the Drop In during this time period live beyond the 800 metre zone.

Figure 3.3.1.3   Use of the Drop In by postcode

Numbers of families in postcode areas

- 1
- 2
- 3

**800m radius from the location of the Drop In: Dee Point Mobile**

3.3.2   Toy Library

The Toy Library is run by a pool of volunteers and co-ordinated by the Sure Start play development worker. It is run from Dee Point Mobile and is open during the Drop In. Records for this service began in September 2004 and the following information was retrieved from the MCA:

- a total of 47 contacts were recorded for the Toy Library between 1st September 2004 and 31st March 2005;
- this equates to an average of seven contacts each month;
- the 47 contacts were by 23 individuals from 20 different families;
- 23% (10) of the contacts at the Toy Library were with lone parents.

Figure 3.3.2.1 illustrates the distribution of the 47 contacts at the Toy Library over the seven month period for which it was operational. Use of the service was highest during October and November 2004. In six of the seven months, the number of individuals using the service is lower than the number of contacts, indicating that, each month, families often used the service on more than one occasion.

Figure 3.3.2.1   Use of the Toy Library: contacts and individuals
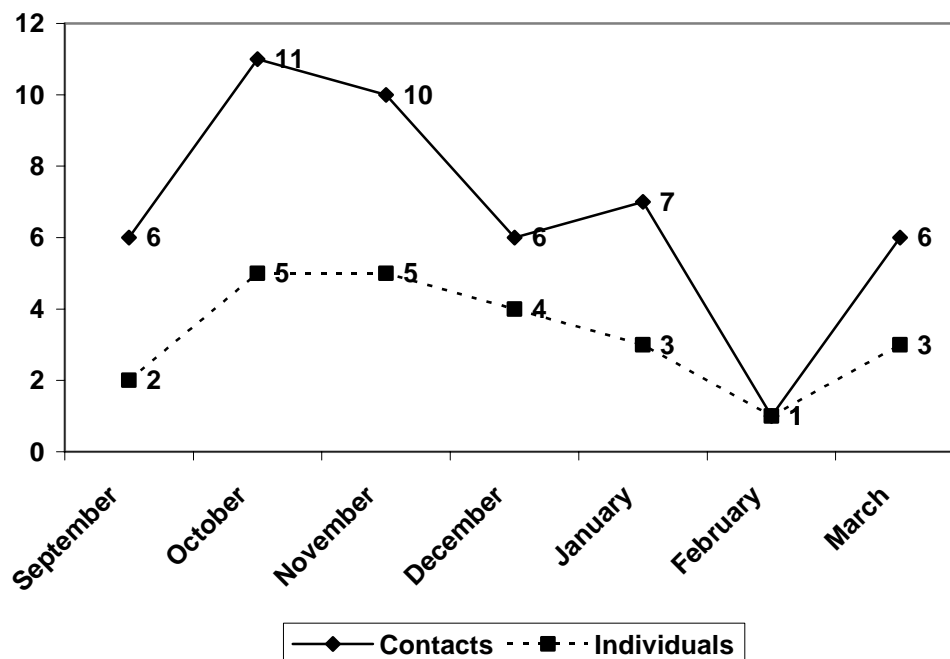
Figure 3.3.2.2 shows the number of contacts and families in each postcode area who have used the Toy Library. The CH1 5D and CH1 5E areas were the postcode areas from which the highest number of families attended the Toy library (6 families in each), with higher number of contacts recorded for people living in CH1 5D.

Figure 3.3.2.2 Postcodes of Toy Library contacts and families
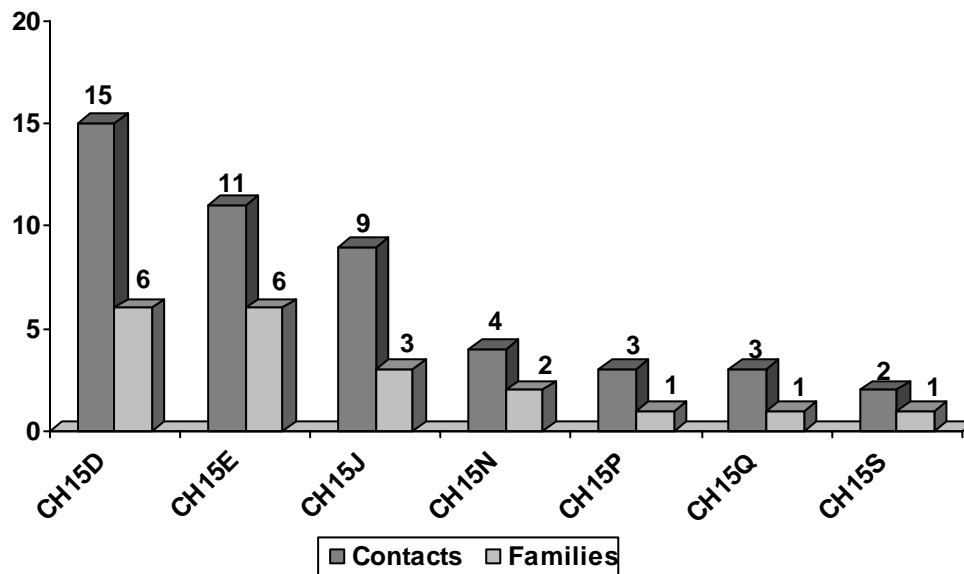
Figure 3.3.2.3 shows the geographical distribution of those people who used the Toy Library between September 2004 and March 2005. This service is run also from Dee Point Mobile but the graduated symbols demonstrate that the majority of families that had used this facility were from a pocket in the north of Blacon. The map shows that the majority of families who used this service travelled more than 'pram pushing distance' from Dee Point Mobile.

Figure 3.3.2.3 Use of the Toy Library by postcode
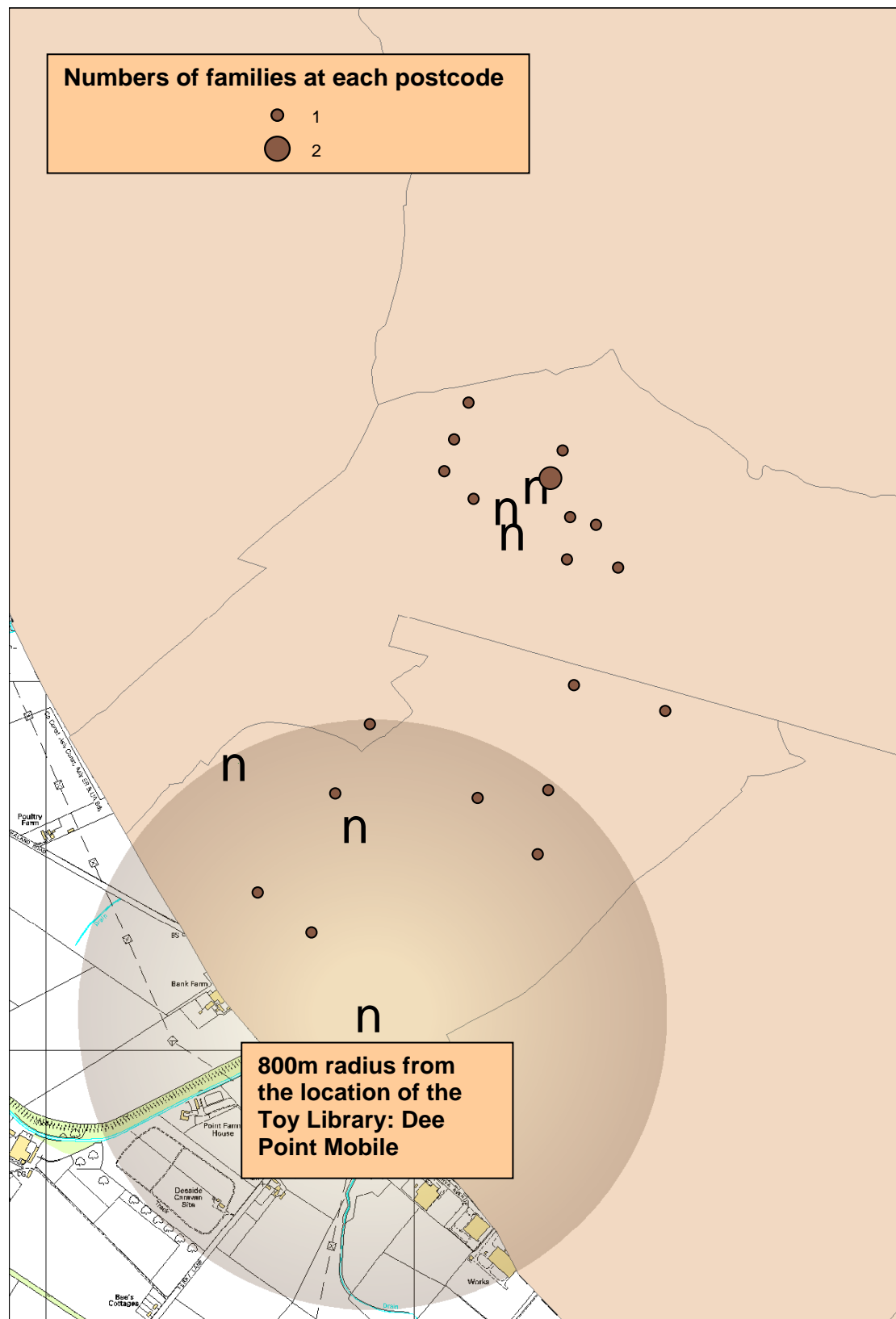
3.3.3 Bumps and Babes

Bumps and Babes also operates from the Mobile at Dee Point. It takes place every Tuesday from 1.00pm to 2.30pm and is staffed by the Sure Start midwives and nursery nurses. There were entries on the database for the entire 12-month period for this service and they showed that:

- a total of 34 contacts were recorded for Bumps and Babes (comprising 20 individuals from 14 different families);
- this means there were, on average, less than three contacts per month;
- the majority of contacts (22, 69%) were with mothers.

Figure 3.3.3.1 illustrates the distribution of the 34 contacts over the 12-month period. There does not appear to be a pattern to these contacts and attendance has fluctuated throughout the year. For eight months of the year, there were no contacts or only one person using this service. Attendance at Bumps and Babes peaked in October 2004 when there were 10 contacts by 4 individuals during the month.

Figure 3.3.3.1 Use of Bumps and Babes: contacts and individuals

Figure 3.3.3.2 shows the number of families who have used Bumps and Babes across the postcode areas and the number of contacts they have made with the service. The CH1 5L area is the postcode area from which the highest number of families attended Bumps and Babes (three families), despite there being a higher number of contacts recorded in the CH1 5B and CH1 5H areas.

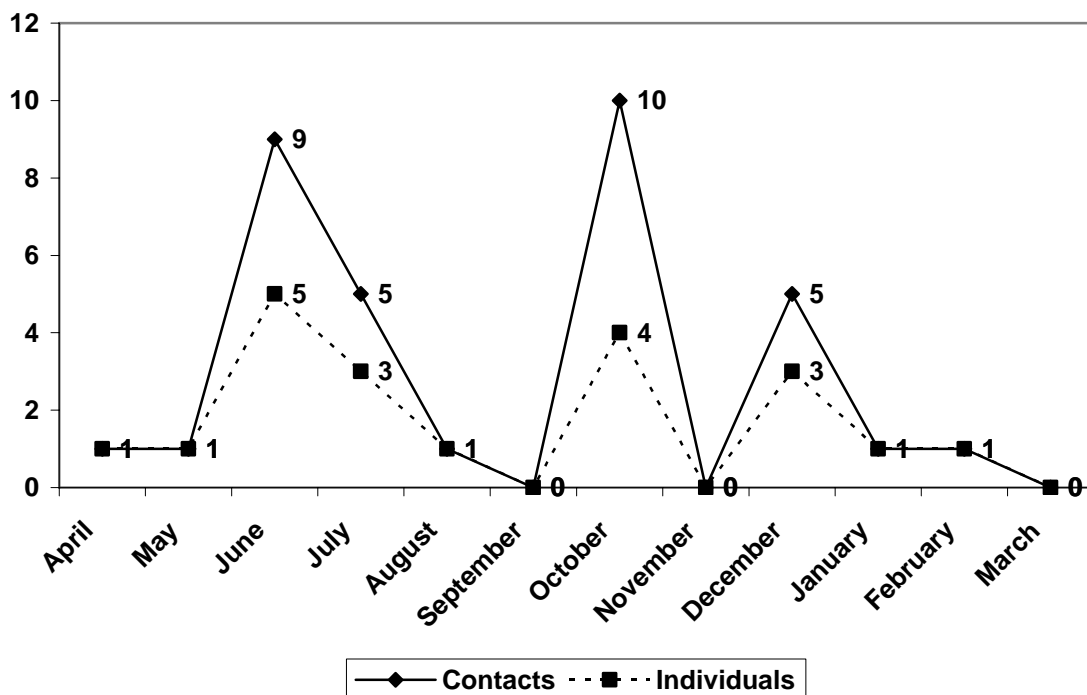**Figure 3.3.3.2 Postcodes of Bumps and Babes contacts and families**
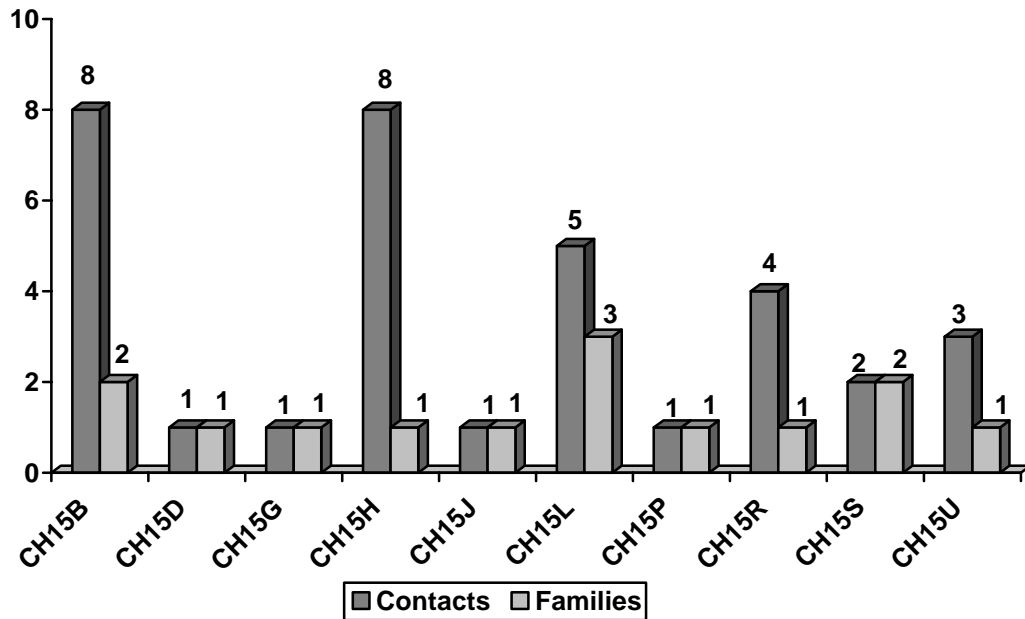
Figure 3.3.3.3 shows the geographical distribution of those who have attended Bumps and Babes. The graduated circles represent the numbers of families using the service at each of the postcodes. The pram-pushing radius from the Dee Point Mobile is also included in this map. As with the Drop In and Toy Library, the majority of families using this service had travelled further than the 800 metre radius: only five live within this area compared with nine outside the area.

Figure 3.3.3.3 Use of Bumps and Babes by postcode
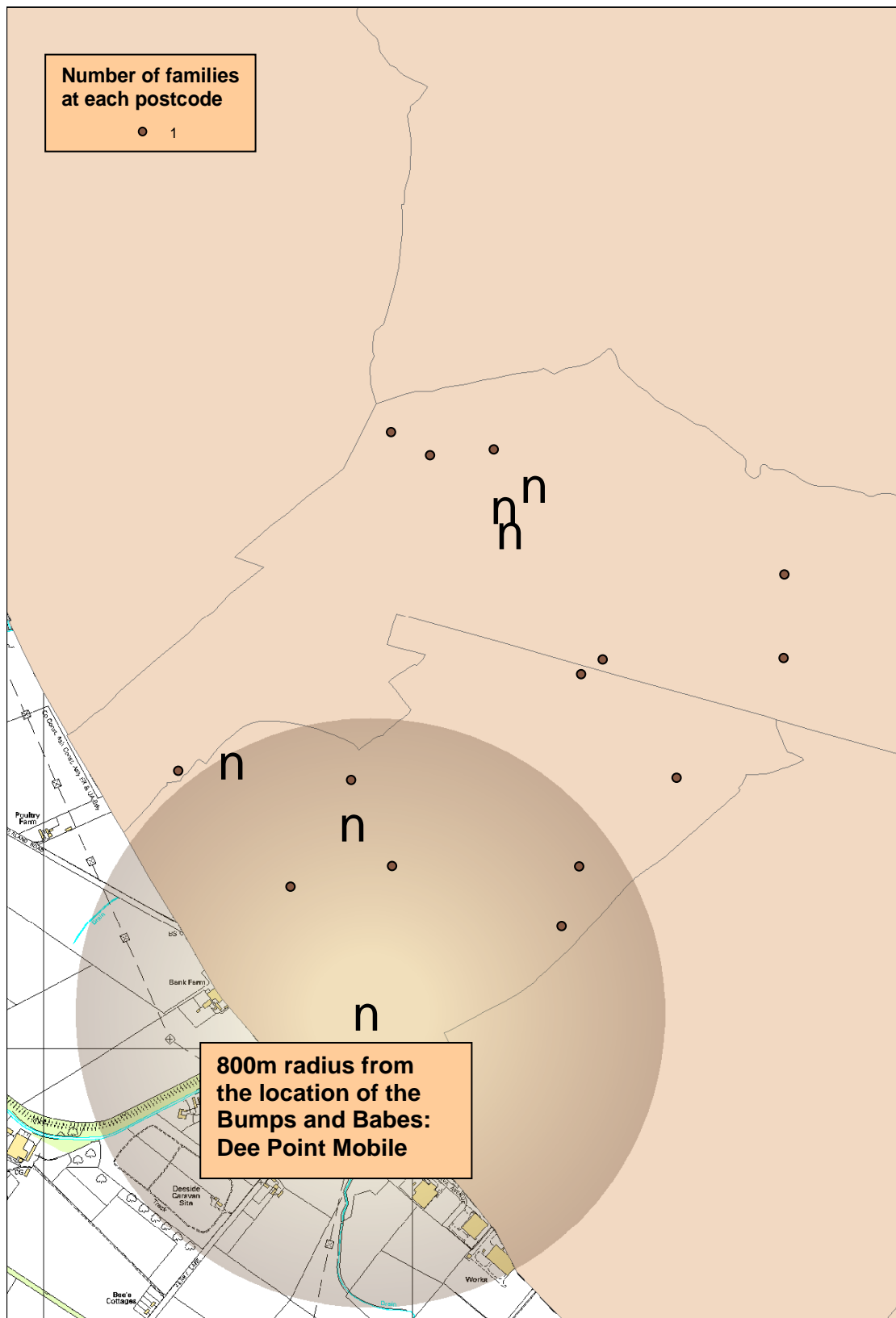
Number of families at each postcode
● 1

800m radius from the location of the Bumps and Babes: Dee Point Mobile

3.3.4 Breastfeeding support

The Breastfeeding Group is run by the Sure Start midwives and nursery nurses from Dee Point Mobile and is offered every Wednesday between 12 noon and 1.00pm. Breastfeeding support is also available on a one-to-one basis in the home. Information about the use of breastfeeding support both within the group and at home was available for the whole year and it showed that:

- 130 contacts were recorded for breastfeeding support between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005;
- there were an average of 11 contacts per month, or three per week;
- the contacts were by 107 individuals from 99 different families;
- 20% (26) of these contacts were with teenage mothers.

Additional breastfeeding support contacts during the year may have been recorded elsewhere on the database, possibly as 'one-to-one support' or 'direct work' with a family or parent.

Figure 3.3.4.1 illustrates the distribution of the 130 breastfeeding support contacts over the 12-month period. The number of individuals using the service is similar to the number of contacts, indicating that, each month, someone would normally use the service on just one occasion.

Figure 3.3.4.1 Use of breastfeeding support: contacts and individuals
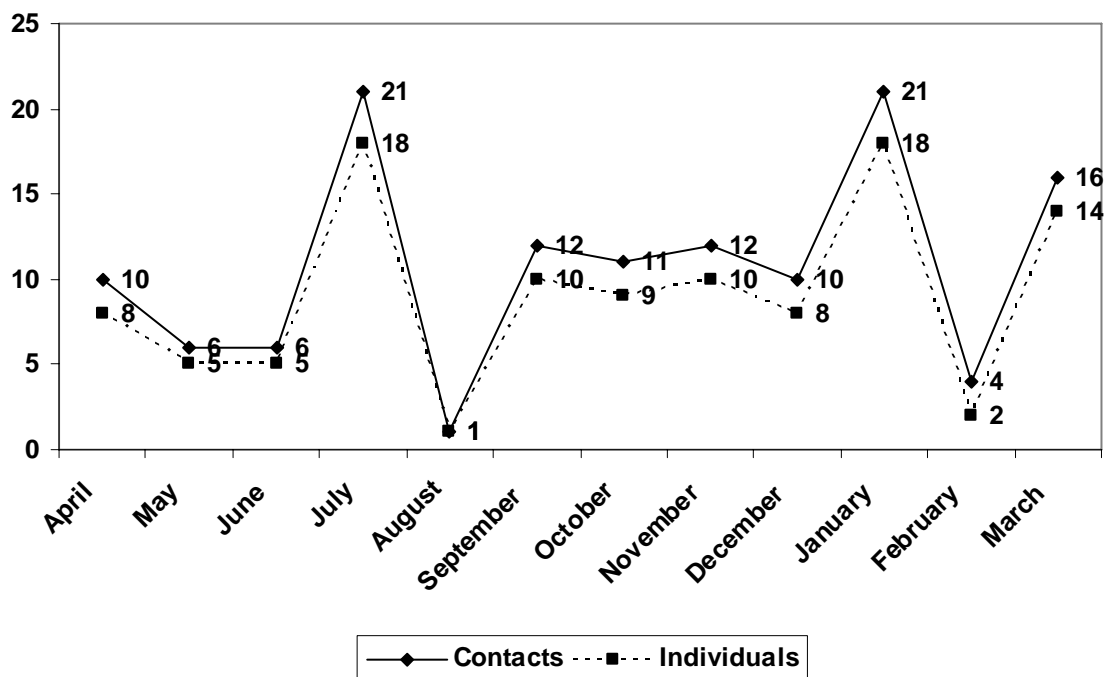
Figure 3.3.4.2 shows the number of contacts and the number of families in each postcode area who have accessed some kind of breastfeeding support. The CH1 5E area was the postcode area with the highest number of contacts and the largest number of families (11) using the service:

Figure 3.3.4.2 Postcodes of breastfeeding support contacts and families
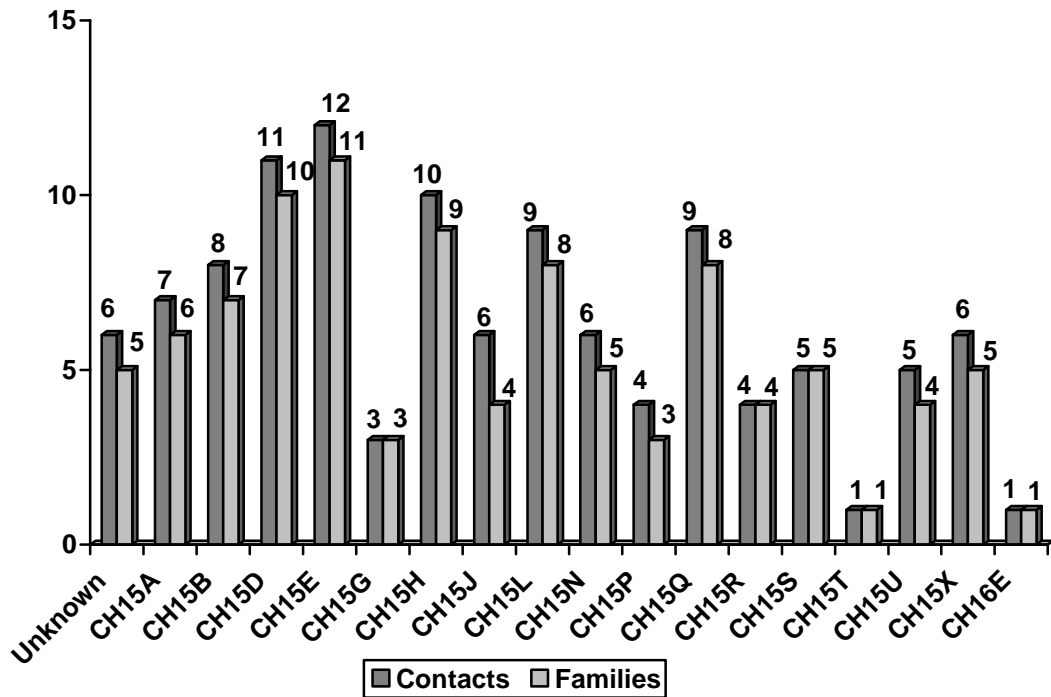
Figure 3.3.4.3 shows the geographical distribution of the families who have used breastfeeding support services. These service users include people who have attended the Breastfeeding Group and those who have received this support on a one-to-one basis in other Sure Start services or at home. The map shows a spread of support across Blacon, with a few pockets where there have been more families accessing support, as represented by the graduated circles.

Figure 3.3.4.3 Use of breastfeeding support by postcode
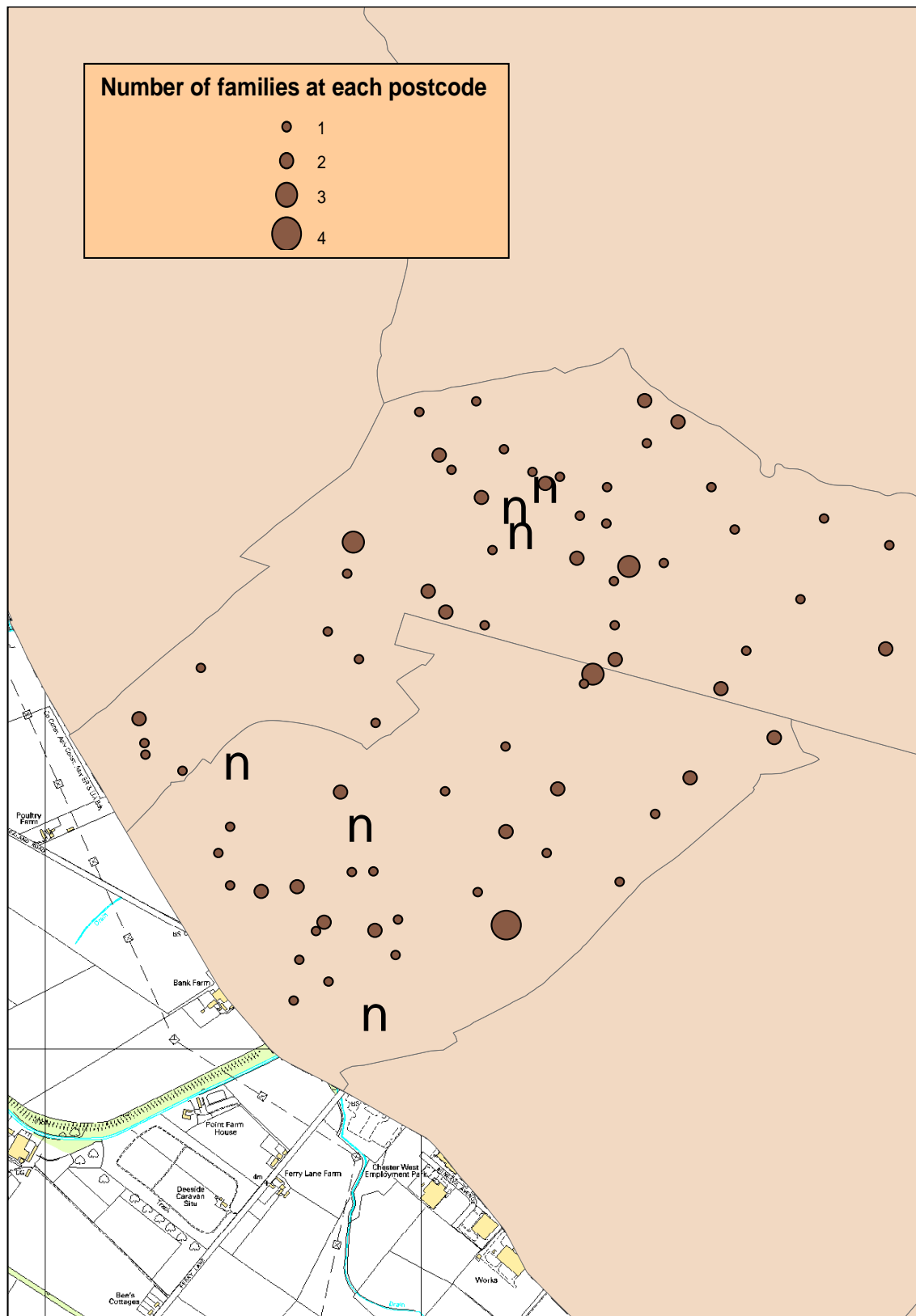
3.3.5   The Pre-birth Experience

The Pre-birth Experience is offered by the Sure Start midwives, health visitor and a physiotherapist from the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Trust. Group sessions are run from the Mobile Unit at Dee Point but the service can also be offered individually at home. The group runs each Wednesday from 1.00pm to 3.00pm and follows the Breast Feeding Group. The following information was retrieved from the database regarding the use of the Pre-birth Experience both within a group setting and on a one-to-one basis in the home:

- a total of 404 contacts were recorded for the Pre-birth Experience between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005;
- this equates to an average of 34 contacts each month, or nine contacts each week;
- these contacts were by 137 individuals from 71 families.

Figure 3.3.5.1 illustrates the monthly distribution of the 404 contacts with this service. The lowest number of contacts was in the holiday months of July and December. The highest number of contacts was recorded for March 2005 (63). In comparison with some other services, there were a larger number of contacts by a smaller number of individuals. The number of individuals using the service each month has always been smaller than the number of contacts, indicating that, each month, someone would normally use the service on more than one occasion. This reflects the fact that the Pre-birth Experience is a course run over a number of weeks.

Figure 3.3.5.1 Use of the Pre-birth Experience: contacts and individuals

Figure 3.3.5.2 shows the number of contacts and the number of families in each postcode area who have used the Pre-birth Experience. The CH1 5E was the area from which the highest number of families used the service (10 families or 14% of the total), although there was a much higher number of contacts recorded by the eight families who lived in the CH1 5N area.

Figure 3.3.5.2 Postcodes of Pre-birth Experience contacts and families
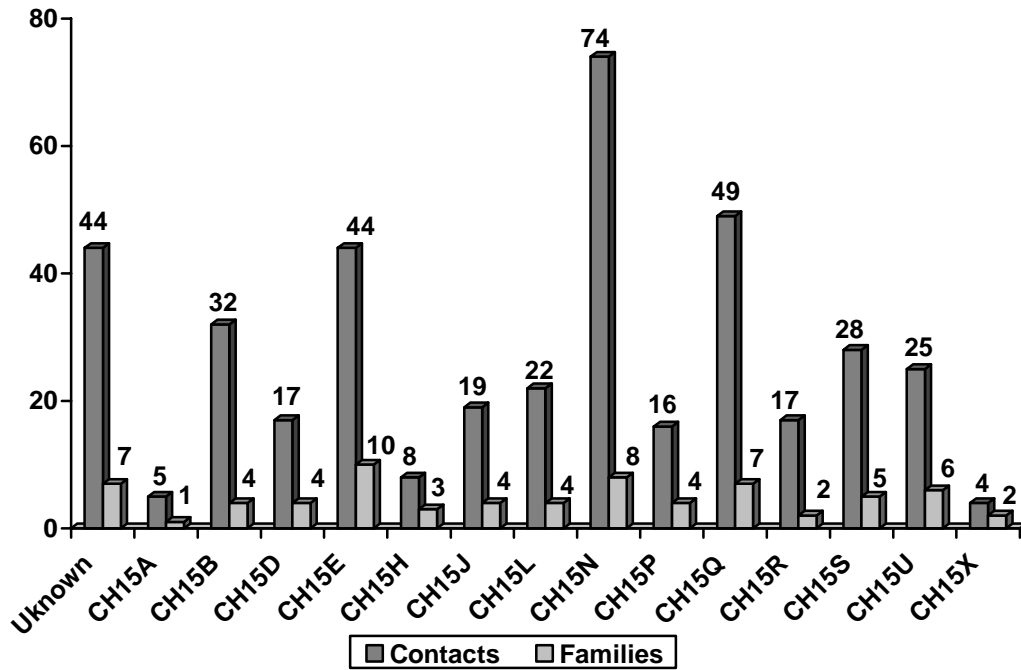
Figure 3.3.5.3 shows the distribution of those people who have accessed all pre-birth services, including the pre-birth sessions at Dee Point Mobile, pre-birth home visits and reunions. The graduated symbols show that there has been an uneven spread of access with few families in the north of Blacon using these services.

Unlike the other services discussed, the majority of service users live within the 800 metre radius of the venue from which the pre-birth sessions and reunions were run. One reason for this may be related to mobility in later pregnancy and the effort required to get to Dee Point Mobile from further afield.

Figure 3.3.5.3 Use of the Pre-birth Experience by postcode
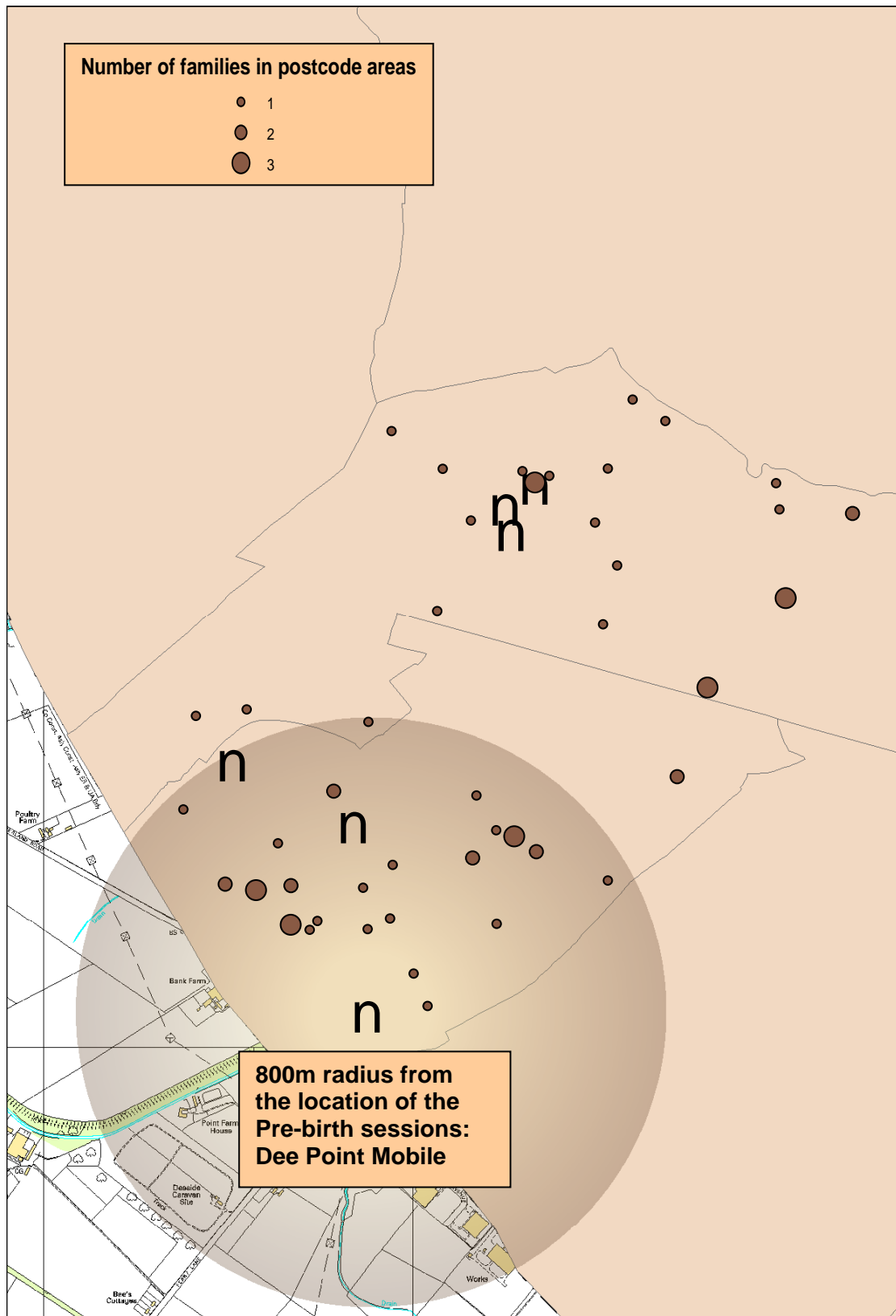
3.3.6 The Pop In

The Pop In is co-ordinated by the Sure Start health visitor, although the nursery nurses, a pool of community health visitors and volunteers are also integral to the service. In addition, the service is frequently attended by other Sure Start staff. The Pop In is a weekly activity, held each Thursday at the Community Centre to the north of Blacon between 9.30am and 11.45am. The information for the service between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005 showed that:

- 304 contacts, by 54 individuals from 26 families were recorded for the Pop In;
- this equates to an average of 25 contacts each month or six per week;
- 47% (142) of the contacts recorded for the Pop In were with mothers;
- 5% of all families who accessed Sure Start Blacon during the year came to the Pop In.

These figures may not be an accurate representation of those attending the Pop In as staff report that this is the programme's best attended service. Additional contacts may not have been recorded on the database, possibly because the individuals were not registered, or have been entered under a different heading.

Figure 3.3.6.1 illustrates the distribution of the Pop In contacts over the 12-month period which peaked during September 2004 and March 2005. This graph shows a relatively high number of contacts by a small number of individuals.
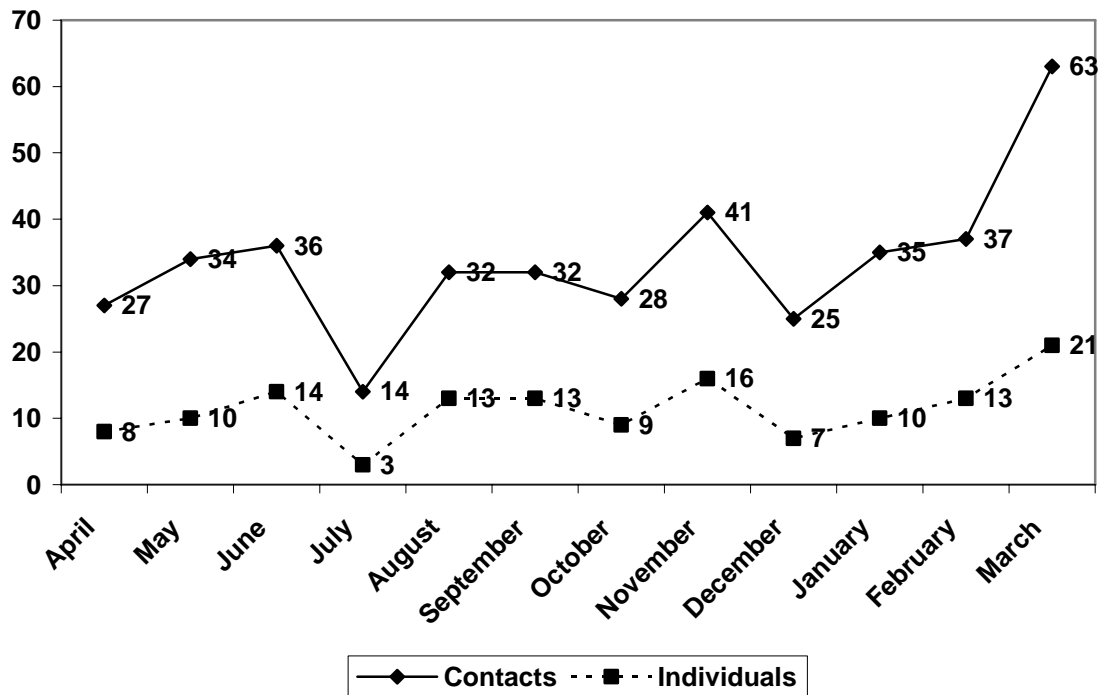
Figure 3.3.6.1 Use of the Pop In: contacts and individuals
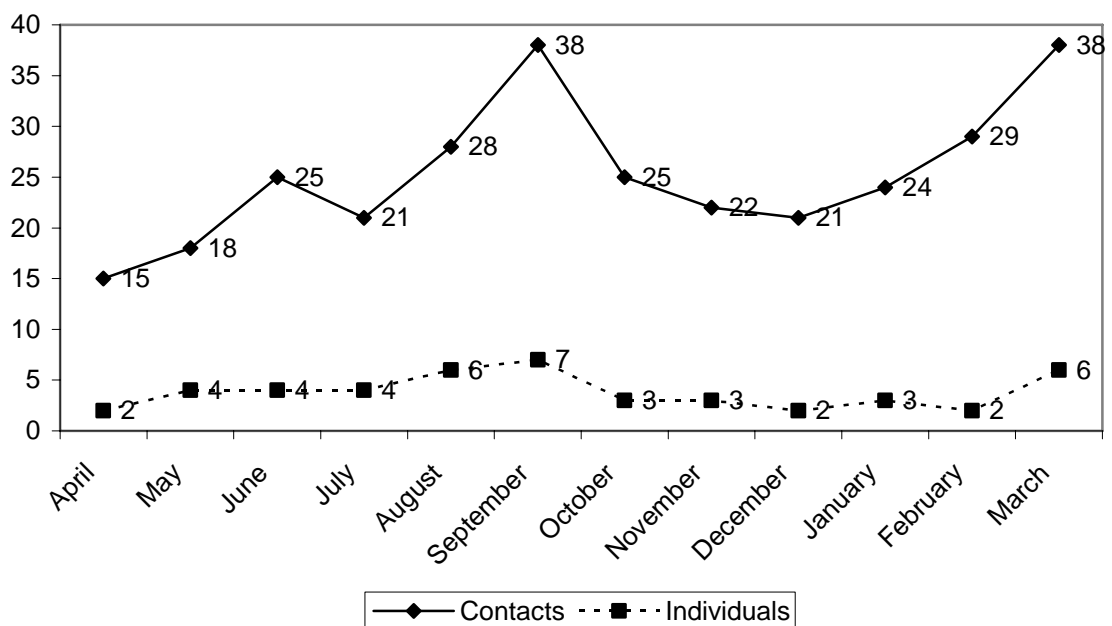
Figure 3.3.6.2 shows the number of contacts and the number of families in each postcode area who have used the Pop In. There was no clear postcode area which had attracted more families than other areas, although there were a much larger number of contacts recorded in the CH1 5U area, suggesting a very intensive use of the service by a particularly small number of families. The contacts from the three families in this one postcode area account for 38% of all the contacts at the Pop In during the year.

Figure 3.3.6.2 Postcodes of Pop In contacts and families
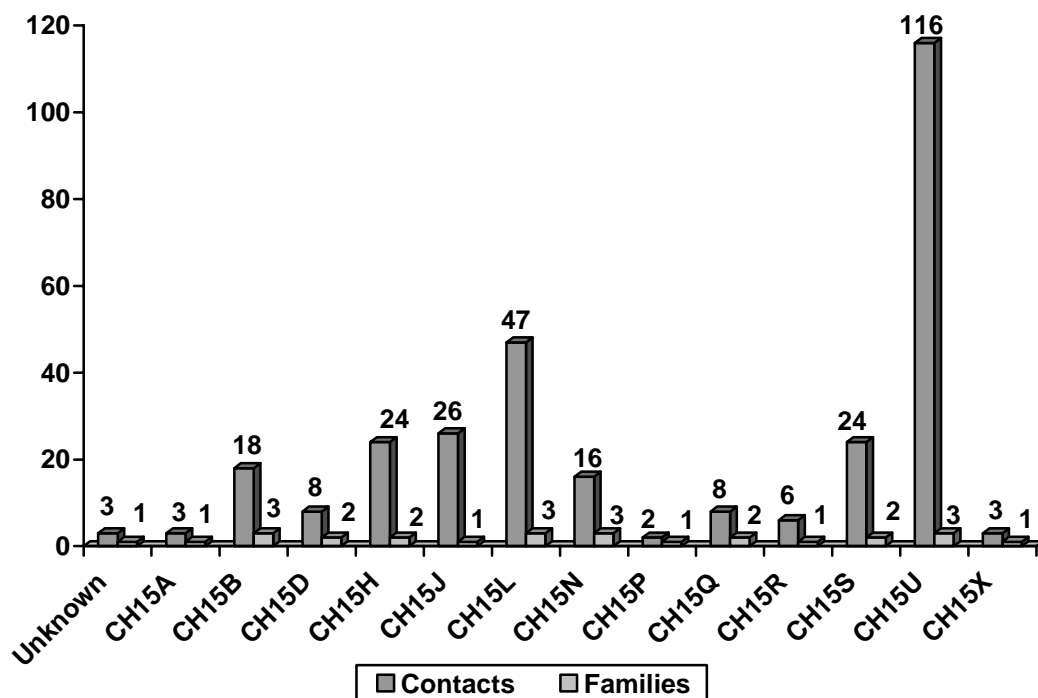
The Pop In service is delivered from the Community Centre in the north of Blacon. Figure 3.3.6.3 illustrates the location of families who had used the Pop In. It shows that there were few families to the east and west of Blacon who had used this service. The pram-pushing distance of 800 metres was plotted onto the map: this shows that a similar number of families inside and outside this area have accessed the service.

Figure 3.3.6.3 Use of the Pop In by postcode
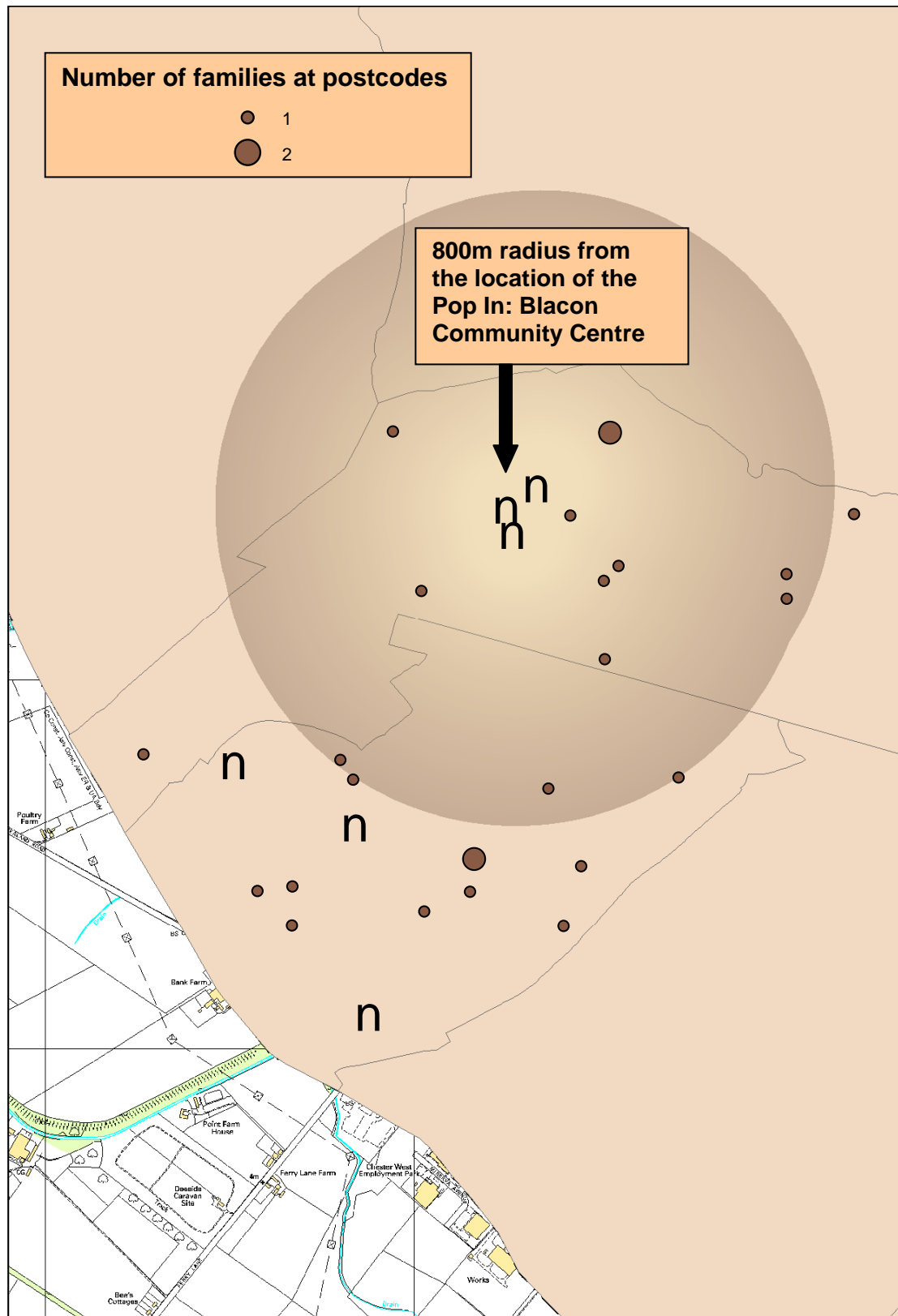
3.3.7 Adult education services

Within Blacon Sure Start there are a number of adult education services operating at any one time and the programme of activities changes on a regular basis to accommodate a variety of courses. English, maths, NVQ in early years, and IT courses take place weekly whilst a range of other courses and activities are offered in shorter blocks throughout the year. These courses are co-ordinated by the adult learning support worker and delivered by a range of Sure Start staff and external workers.

As this section of the report is about adult education, the figures presented here refer to contacts with parents and carers only. Although children may have been present at some of the activities, the focus of this area of work is adult involvement. The following information was retrieved about the contacts with adult learning services and courses which ran from a variety of locations throughout Blacon during the year:

- 24 different adult education categories were recorded on the database;
- 15 of these categories related to activities and courses and nine referred to the promotion of courses and support to individuals offered by the adult learning support worker;
- there were a total of 689 parents and carer contacts with the adult education service between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005 – this equates to an average of 57 contacts per month or 13 contacts per week;
- 433 (63%) of the 689 contacts were at groups and courses – this equates to a monthly average of 36 contacts at groups and courses, or a weekly average of eight;
- 256 (37%) of the contacts related to promotional work and direct support offered by the adult learning support worker – this equates to a monthly average of 21 contacts for support-related categories (a weekly average of five).

An analysis of the number of families accessing adult education activities shows that:

- a total of 161 families accessed adult education activities – this is equivalent to 36% of all families who had contact with the programme during the year;
- the activity accessed by the largest number of adults was the CLAIT computer course, used by 30 people from 23 families, followed by MOT for Your Body, used by 26 parents and carers from 24 families;
- the activities attended by the smallest number of families were the family craft day, Funky Stitchery and Get on with Maths. These were each accessed by six families.

Adult learning services provided by Sure Start Blacon can be divided into three distinct categories: promotion and support; education, and fun activities. The contacts with families under each of these headings are discussed below.

3.3.7.1 Promotion and support

There were nine categories of support activities listed on the MCA database in relation to adult education: these included home visits, the promotion of activities with parents and phone/text advice. The following was found during analysis of these activities:

- there were 256 parent and carer contacts for adult education support between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005;

- the largest single category of support, accounting for 19% (48) of contacts, was transport to and from adult learning activities: a total of nine mums accessed this element of the service;

- the promotion of adult education at existing groups accounted for 19% of the contacts with parents and carers.

3.3.7.2 Education

There were eight categories of adult education activities listed on the database, including computer courses, food hygiene and an NVQ. The analysis of the education activities showed that:

- there were 221 parent and carer contacts for educational activities between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005;

- the NVQ course in Early Years was accessed by the highest number of parents, with 18 parents, including four fathers, attending;

- Get on with Maths was accessed by the fewest, with only five parents. There were, however, 60 contacts with 14 parents on the Get on with English course.

3.3.7.3 Fun

There were seven categories of 'fun' adult education activities listed on the database, such as MOT for Your Body and Get Crafty for the Kids. The analysis of the 'fun' activities showed that:

- there were 212 parents and carer contacts for fun activities between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005;

- MOT for Your Body was the course attended by the largest number of parents. This activity accounted for 105 contacts with 26 parents and carers;

- Funky Stitchery was accessed by the fewest parents with six mums attending.

Figure 3.3.7.1 shows the number of families who have used Sure Start Blacon adult learning services from each postcode area. The CH1 5U, CH1 5D, CH1 5E areas to the north of Blacon had the largest number of families accessing these services, together accounting for 30% of all service users.

Figure 3.3.7.1 Postcodes of adult education service families
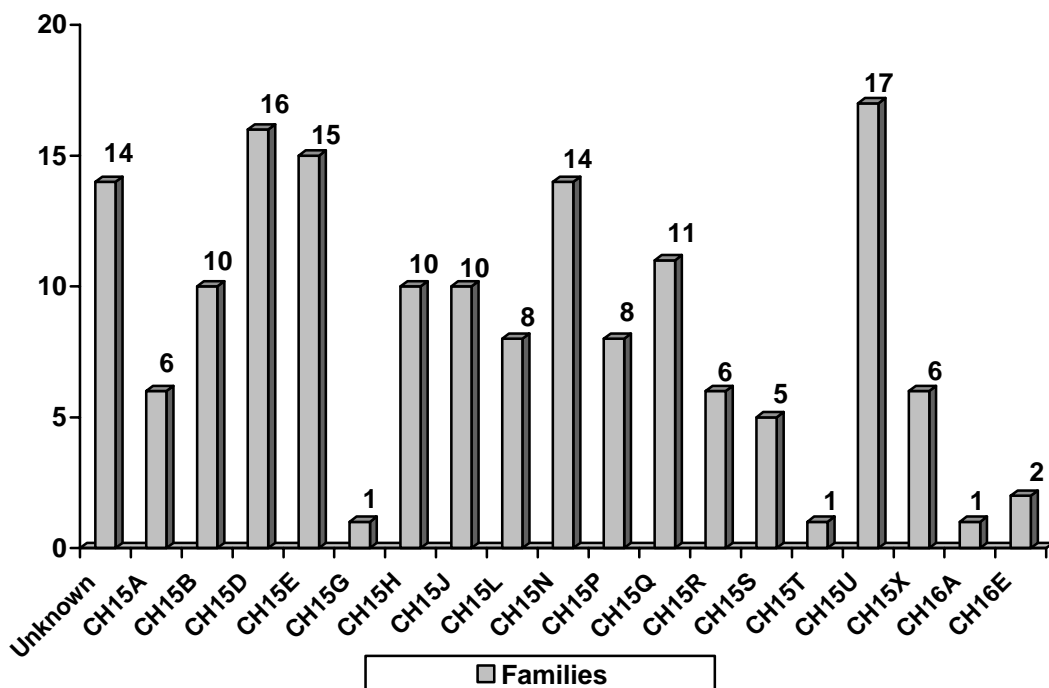
Figure 3.3.7.2 illustrates the geographical distribution of families who have used Sure Start Blacon adult education services. As these services, activities and support are provided in a range of community locations and in the home, it is not possible to consider pram-pushing distances from one location. The distribution of service usage is relatively evenly spread throughout the area, although there are pockets that these services have not penetrated.

Figure 3.3.7.2 Use of adult education services by postcode
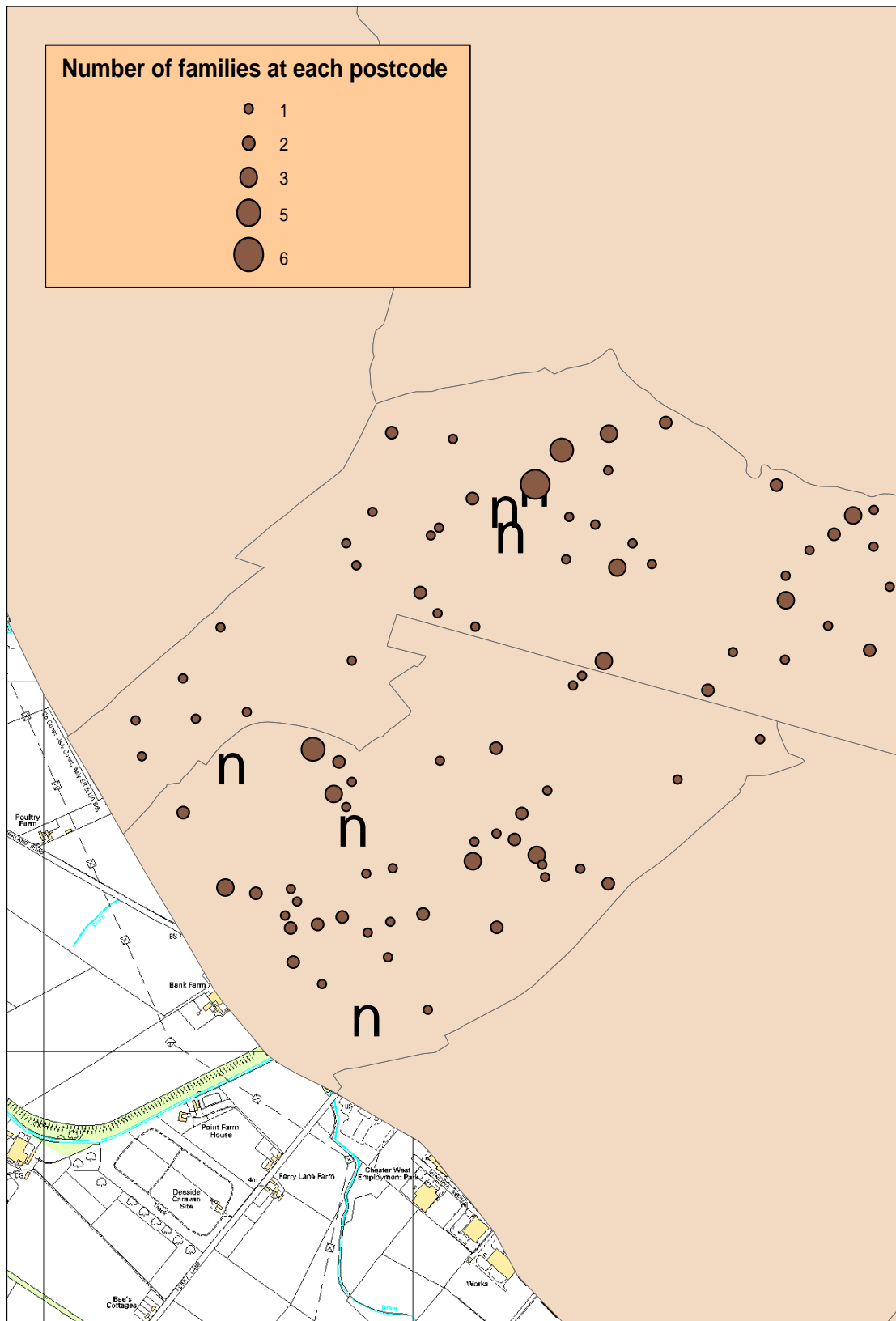
3.3.8 One-to-one support

One-to-one support is offered to families by a range of staff within the Sure Start team. This service is in addition to any support offered within the context of a specific group or activity, such as those described above, and most commonly takes place within the home.

Although one-to-one support was recorded under several categories on the database, for the purpose of the analysis they were grouped together. The information showed that:

- there were 2,432 one-to-one support contacts between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005;
- this equates to an average of 203 contacts per month, or 47 contacts per week;
- one-to-one support accounted for 18% of all contacts with Sure Start Blacon during the year.

Figure 3.3.8.1 shows the geographical distribution of families who had received one-to-one support from Sure Start Blacon staff. Although it is likely that much of this support will have occurred in the home, some support may have also take place at groups and activities throughout the programme area. The map shows the relatively widespread distribution of one-to-one support throughout Blacon.

Figure 3.3.8.1   Use of one-to-one support by postcode
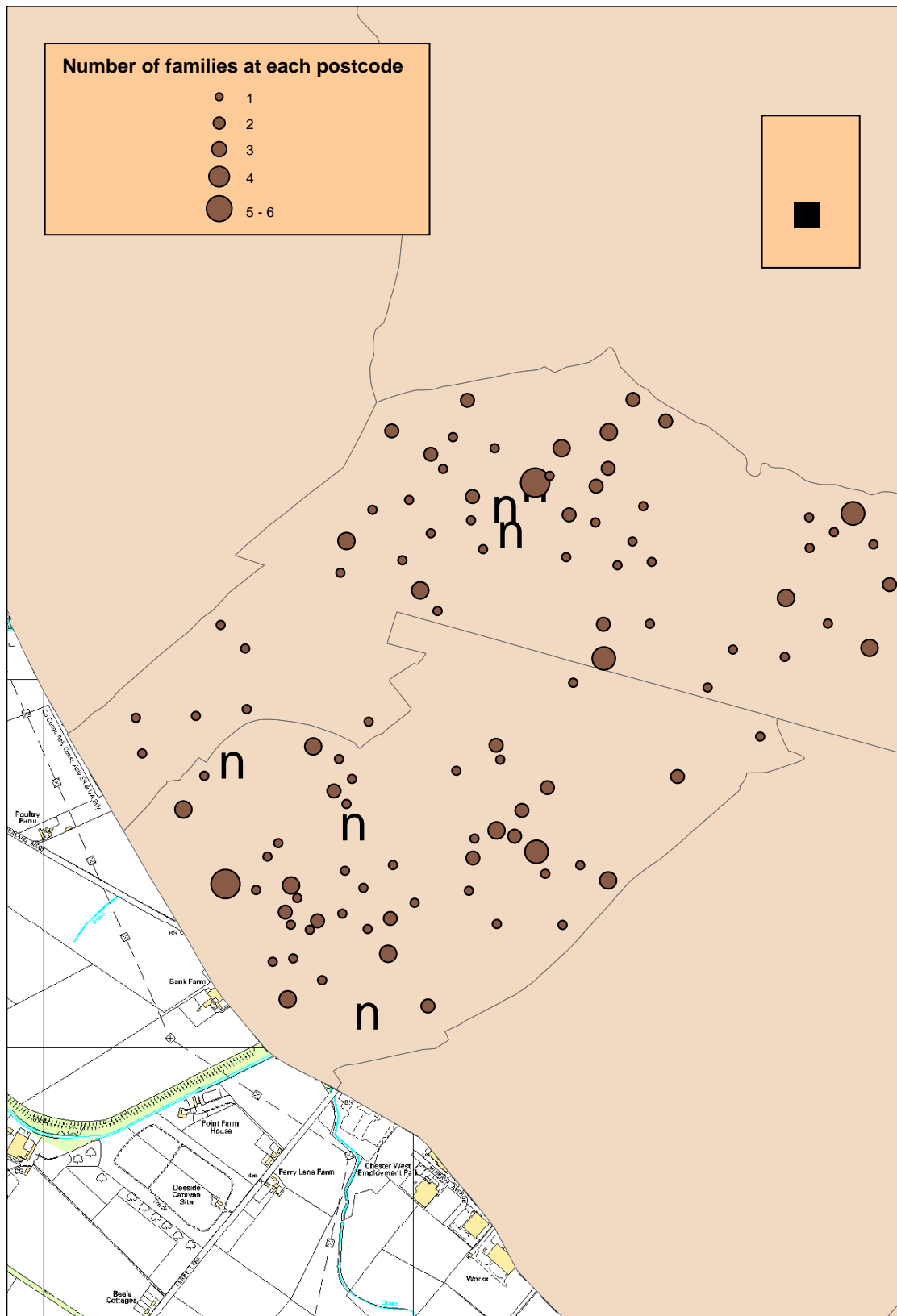
3.4 Service contacts by different groups

Having considered some of the individual activities, it is also possible to look in more detail at specific groups who have accessed these services. In addition to the age and sex of adult service users, this section also considers the use of services by fathers, lone parents, parents with a disability, and teenage parents.

3.4.1 Fathers

There were 350 contacts recorded with fathers between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005. This represented 3% of all contacts, although fathers make up 7% of the registered people using services during this time. The following information was also retrieved regarding contacts with fathers:

- fathers were most frequently seen during the course of family support activities – these represented 35% of the contacts with this group;
- one fifth of the contacts with fathers were related to Sure Start Blacon adult education activities. The course which attracted the largest number of fathers was CLAIT Computers. There were also a relatively high number of contacts with dads on the Get on with English and the NVQ in Early Years;
- fathers were least likely to access activities run by the play development worker, representing less than 1% of all contacts.

3.4.2 Lone parents

There were 785 recorded contacts with lone parents on the database between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005. This represents approximately 6% of the total number of contacts, although lone parents made up 12% of all parents using services. Whilst there appeared to be a spread of usage by lone parents across different groups and activities, the analysis showed that:

- 31% of the contacts from lone parents were for family support activities;
- although the numbers of families accessing the service were relatively small, 23% of the contacts at the Toy Library were with lone parents;
- lone parents made least use of the health visitor activities and support – only 3% of the contacts from lone parents were with these services.

3.4.3 Parents with a disability

There were a total of 61 recorded contacts with disabled parents between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005, representing less than 1% of the total number of contacts during this time. The following information was retrieved regarding these contacts:

- parents with a disability were most likely to access family support services – these activities represented 39% of their contacts with Sure Start Blacon;
- parents with a disability were least likely to access the adult education activities and courses: these activities represented 3% of all contacts with parents with a disability;
- the figures show an average of nine contacts per disabled parent per year compared with an overall average of 13 contacts for each parent or carer.

3.4.4 Teenage parents

A total of 209 contacts were recorded for teenage parents between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005. This represents approximately 2% of all contacts recorded during this time, although teenage parents made up 6% of all parents using Sure Start Blacon services. The analysis showed that:

- teenage parents most frequently accessed family support: this provision accounted for 24% of all contacts with teenage parents;
- teenage parents were over-represented in their use of breastfeeding support services, accounting for 20% of all contacts with the service;
- teenage parents were least likely to access the adult education and learning activities and courses: these represented 1% of all contacts with teenage parents.

3.4.5 Age of parents

Table 3.4.5.1 shows that between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005, three quarters of the parents and carers who accessed Sure Start services were aged between 20 and 34 years old. The number of individuals in each of these age groups, as shown in Chapter 2 on Table 2.4.6.1, was also similar, indicating a slightly higher average number of contacts for parents and carers aged between 25 and 29 years than for the other groups.

Table 3.4.5.1 Age of adult contacts

Age group (years)	Number of contacts	%
16 – 19	336	5
20 – 24	1,588	24
25 – 29	1,553	24
30 – 34	1,502	23
35 – 39	657	10
40 – 44	415	6
45 and over	46	1
Unknown	434	7
Total	**6,531**	**100**

3.4.6 Sex of adult contacts

The database contained details of 6,531 contacts with parents and carers during the 12-month period. Further analysis of the sex of these parents and carers showed that:

- there were 354 contacts with adult males: this equates to 5% of all contacts with adults during this time;
- there were 6,177 contacts with adult females: this equates to 95% of all adult contacts during this time.

Table 3.4.6.1 illustrates the number of contacts with each group of adults accessing the programme during the year. It shows that 99% of the contacts with adult males were with fathers and 98% of the contacts with adult females were with mothers.

Table 3.4.6.1 Family position of adult contacts

Type of adult	Number of contacts	%
Mother	6,177	95
Father	350	5
Grandmother	85	<1
Aunt	29	<1
Carer (all female)	23	<1
Uncle	2	<1
Stepfather	2	<1
Total	**6,531**	**100**

Chapter 4
Conclusions

4.1   Introduction

The examination of the information on the MCA database has produced a picture of engagement with the Sure Start local programme in Blacon between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005. The process of data analysis and the information it reveals has led to a number of conclusions, which are discussed further below.

4.2   Limitations of the study

There have been a number of limitations to the analysis of the data extracted from the MCA database.

- Some fields within the database contained incomplete data or were blank. These included partial or no postcodes recorded for contacts and missing entries in fields such as age and lone parent status. As a result, the figures on 'reach', particularly in respect of some groups of people, could be an underestimation of the numbers accessing these services.

- It was not possible to look at the use of Sure Start services by families which include children with special needs as the disability field for all of the children was blank.

- During the initial data extraction, 1,446 contacts were identified with no schedule date or service allocation. These contacts were subsequently omitted from the analysis as their true date of origin was unknown.

- All of the figures presented in this report are dependent on accurate records of attendance being kept and logged on the MCA. It is impossible to deduce how far a low number of contacts may be a result of attendance of people who are not registered, under recording, low levels of use or a combination of both of these factors.

4.3   The 'reach' of Sure Start Blacon

The aim of this report was to establish the reach of the Sure Start Blacon programme. At the most global level, the analysis of information taken from the MCA database suggests that, allowing for babies who will have been born during the year and children reaching four years old, almost two thirds (64%) of all eligible families living in the area

accessed Sure Start Blacon services between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005, although underlying this is a wide variation in the extent of contact. One fifth of the individuals who had contact with the programme had done so on just one occasion whilst a similar number had contact 20 or more times.

A large number of parents, carers and children were new to Sure Start Blacon during the year. The fact that just over 40% of the service users who had contact with the programme did so for the first time reinforces the importance of continually informing families about both new and ongoing activities that are offered.

The pattern over the year from April 2004 to March 2005 demonstrated a growing proportion of contacts that were with children: during the final three months of 2005 there were substantially more contacts with children than with adults. Despite this increase, the figures extracted from the MCA database showed that the programme was not reaching the monthly target of between one quarter and one third set by the Sure Start Unit. The month that the largest proportion of children accessed Sure Start Blacon services was January 2005 when 23% of eligible children were seen by the programme.

Sure Start Blacon services had reached some lone parent families, teenage parents, fathers, and parents with a disability, although the data was not available to identify the proportion of the eligible population in each of these groups that had been reached. The information on access to Sure Start services by some lone parent families, teenage parents, fathers and parents with a disability showed that, overall, they had fewer contacts than other parents but they were over represented in their use of some services such as teenage parents and breast feeding support and lone parents at the Toy Library.

Sure Start programmes aim to provide a range of services to meet the needs of individual families. Although 26% of the families who had contact with Sure Start Blacon during the year had used six or more different services, 29% of families had accessed only one service. These figures suggest that, in addition to involving new families, the programme could significantly broaden its reach by encouraging families that they have established contact with to access more than one service.

The most frequently used service was the one-to-one support with a Sure Start worker, accounting for 18% of all contacts with the programme during the year. This was also the service with the most dispersed geographical reach, probably because it often took place at the individual's home. Although it is possible to speculate on the reason for the

high number of contacts, the questions it raises is whether its popularity is as a result of the nature of the service, the fact that it is provided in the home, greater accuracy in the recording of contacts or a combination of these factors.

Contacts with parents, carers and children at a number of weekly groups and activities were also analysed in some detail. In some cases, this information appeared to present lower numbers of contacts than were expected, given the perceived popularity of the service. The higher number of monthly contacts was recorded under adult education services, the Pre-birth Experience and the Pop In. The analysis of the number of contacts each month against the number of individuals attending shows that some activities are more likely to attract a regular group of users (for example the Pre-birth Experience and Pop In) than others (for example, the Drop In and breastfeeding support).

The analysis of postcode information has shown that two postcode areas to the north (CH1 5U and CH1 5D) and one area to the south (CH1 5N) together contained 36% of the families who live in the Sure Start Blacon area. The area that the greatest number of service users came from was CH1 5D, and this postcode area also contained the largest number of families with children under four years old. The highest proportion of eligible families to access services, however, lived in the CH1 5R area to the south. It is important that the number of eligible families is considered alongside the data on the number of service users in each postcode area to avoid a distorted picture.

The use of a GIS programme has helped to create a visual picture of reach and has allowed the analysis of service use in conjunction with the theoretical 'pram pushing distance' prescribed by the Sure Start Unit. The majority of services and activities, for example, are run from Dee Point Mobile, which is located in the far south of Blacon. Despite this, the distribution of service users (as shown on the maps), demonstrates that many live outside the 800 metre radius. This suggests that for those people who have attended services, the 'pram pushing distance' does not appear to be of overriding importance. It is impossible to say, however, that the distance has not been a factor for those families who do not attend, or it is a factor contributing to the popularity of one-to-one services that are provided in the home.

The concept of reach can thus be seen in terms of the total eligible population, the number of service users, their characteristics, and the extent to which they access Sure Start activities. The key to the demonstration of programme reach, however, is the

availability of accurate data, both in the level of registration and the monitoring of activities.

4.4   Data monitoring recommendations

Accurate data for analysis can only be available if the processes for the initial registration of families and for attendance monitoring are robust and procedures for data verification are in place.

The first step is to ensure that as many parents as possible register with the programme: important information is lost if parents do not register but attend activities. Once a parent has agreed to register, all of the personal information required should be completed on initial registration with the programme. Whilst giving information such as disability, ethnicity and age is not mandatory, newly registered families need to be encouraged to provide all information. In doing so, this will help give a clear picture of service use and, in particular, enable the programme to establish if traditionally 'hard to reach' groups are accessing services. Systems should also be in place to identify duplicate records and gaps in information.

A change in the way that services are named and recorded would simplify any future analysis. Services are currently recorded by the type of service worker followed by the nature of the service provided. By changing the set-up and identifying the type of service first, it would be more straightforward to analyse the use of individual services. Whilst it will not be possible to change how current services are recorded, any new services added to the MCA could be recorded in this manner.

It is also important that accurate and complete records of attendance for all services are taken and transferred to the database. All entries upon the database must have a schedule date and service type in order to provide a complete picture of the activity within the programme: without this information, contacts have to be excluded from any analysis.

It is unfortunate if the extent of the work being undertaken within the programme cannot be reflected in reach reports or in official statistics. Incomplete or missing information on the database will reduce the figures submitted to the Sure Start Unit on the M3 and M7 returns and raise questions about the accuracy of any detailed analysis that is undertaken.

It is hoped that this report will also help Sure Start Blacon identify their needs for data collection and analysis in the future. Consideration must be given to the structuring of personal information and activities on the database. In order to make best use of the wealth of information that is available it is imperative that the data that is put in is considered in relation to how it can be extracted and used.

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