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# **Widnes Sure Start User Satisfaction Survey**

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**July 2003**

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- all those parents and carers who completed and returned questionnaires;
- Hannah Joinson for entering all the data from the questionnaires.

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In August 2003 Chester College of Higher Education changed its name to University College Chester.

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## Summary

There is a high level of satisfaction with Sure Start services overall and with individual services, even with services that are used by relatively few people.

Although there is a high level of knowledge of the existence of the Sure Start programme, there appears to be a need to provide more detailed information on the range and type of services available.

People principally use the community based services as a means of accessing Sure Start. There were variations by postcode in the way services were used. Those living in postcode area WA8 8\* made the least use of services overall.

There is an indication that those who have or care for disabled children make less use of Sure Start, although reasons for this were not explored.

The majority of comments made about the services were very positive and reinforced the high overall level of satisfaction amongst those using services. The comments also illustrated that there are issues which can restrict access to services, e.g. being in employment, where people live and the age of their children. The comments also showed that, even amongst those who used services, there was a lack of knowledge about the range of services provided by Sure Start.

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## Chapter 1

### Background

Nationally, Sure Start was established by the Government with the aim of meeting the needs of families with children aged 0-4 years in areas of high socio-economic deprivation. Monitoring and evaluation of local Sure Start programmes was a statutory requirement and objectives and targets were set for Sure Start programmes so that progress could be monitored to ascertain whether, and to what extent, a programme had "made a difference".

To fulfil the requirement for monitoring and evaluation, Widnes Sure Start commissioned the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR), Chester College to undertake research to understand how well the Widnes Sure Start programme is working in terms of the objectives, targets and principles of Sure Start.

The aim of this survey was to establish levels of satisfaction with Sure Start services amongst parents or carers of children aged 0-7 years in the Widnes Sure Start area, over the first three years of the programme.

The objectives of the survey were to:

- fulfil the national requirements for reporting levels of satisfaction with Sure Start Services;
- review the frequency of use of each of the services;
- establish how helpful each service has been for the eligible population;
- review the pattern of use of Sure Start Services with respect to area of residence and age and number of children;
- obtain comments from eligible families on their experiences of Sure Start services.

It was anticipated that the process of surveying the population would contribute to raising the profile of the services in the area.

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## **Chapter 2**

### **Study design and methodology**

#### **2.1 Study design and methodology**

This study of users' satisfaction with Sure Start services in Widnes used a survey approach. This enabled people themselves to report on their experiences and perceptions of the services. Data were collected using postal questionnaires sent to a stratified random sample of parents drawn from across the whole Sure Start area.

#### **2.2 The Sure Start population and how it was sampled**

The target population for this survey was parents or carers of children aged under 4 between 2000 and 2003 who lived within the Sure Start area. It was known at the time that 60% of eligible children had been registered with the Sure Start programme. To ensure that parents or carers who were not registered also received questionnaires, in line with Sure Start Unit guidance, the sampling frame for the survey was compiled from the Sure Start database of eligible children at November 2001, a list of babies delivered between December 2001 and December 2002 and the database of families who had been registered at any time from the beginning of the Sure Start programme. 60% of the questionnaires were sent to registered families and 40% to those eligible who were not registered. The sample was further stratified by the geographical distribution by postcode of eligible families as described by Jones (2003).

This distribution divided the Sure Start area into three:

- postcodes WA8 4\* - the area north of the railway line, with 28% of eligible children;
- postcodes WA8 7\* - the area bounded by the railway line, Liverpool Road and Dundalk Road, with 27% of eligible children;

- 
- postcodes WA8 8\* - the remaining area bounded by the Sure Start boundary, Liverpool Road and Dundalk Road, with 45% of eligible children.

### **2.3 Design and testing of the questionnaire**

The questions included in the questionnaire related to:

- socio-demographic data, e.g. age, gender, marital status, number and ages of children in family;
- frequency of use of Sure Start services, comprising a list of 35 community based services, services in the home and informal advice;
- satisfaction with services used;
- year of use .

There was also the opportunity for people to add their own comments about their experience of Sure Start and to ask for further information.

The questionnaire was developed in association with the Programme Coordinator, the Core Team Manager and a Sure Start team member and was tested for readability. After approval from the Sure Start Management Board, the questionnaire was piloted with 14 parents who were users of Sure Start community based services. Following receipt of comments from those piloting the questionnaire, two questions were added. A copy of the questionnaire and the detachable prize draw entry can be found in Appendix 1.

A number of steps were taken to increase the response rate for the survey:

- registered families received advance notice of the survey in a personal letter from the Sure Start Programme Coordinator;
- posters advertising the survey were displayed in community centres within the Sure Start area;
- a pre-paid reply envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire;
- reminders (Appendix 1) were sent two weeks after the initial mailing;

- 
- completed questionnaires were entered into a prize draw, which offered the chance of winning one of three shopping vouchers worth £50, £30 or £20.

The prize draw entry, with the respondent's name and address, was included with the questionnaire as a detachable sheet. The detachable sheet also provided an opportunity to request more information about Sure Start services.

A large print version of the questionnaire was available on request and, at the Sure Start office, there was a contact person who was able to offer help in completing the questionnaire.

## **2.4 Distribution and handling of questionnaires**

Following approval from the Management Board and piloting, the questionnaires were posted from the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR), Chester College. They were addressed to a named person or to "The mum, dad or carer at..."

The timetable for the administration of the questionnaire was:

14 February 2003	<b>Mailing of questionnaires</b>
28 February 2003	<b>Closing date for returns</b> Preparation of list of non-respondents
3 March 2003	Reminders posted to non-respondents
14 March 2003	<b>Final closing date</b>
19 March 2003	Prize draw entries to Widnes
23 March 2003	<b>Prize Draw at Fun Day</b>

One completed questionnaire was returned after the closing date for entry into the prize draw and was included in the analysis.

To ensure that data used in the analysis were anonymous the following procedure was followed. When a completed questionnaire was received at CPHR the last three digits of the postcode were manually transferred from the detachable prize

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draw entry to the front page of the questionnaire. The prize draw entry was detached and returned to the Sure Start Programme Coordinator at Widnes.

Winners of the prize draw were notified by post by the Sure Start Coordinator.

Only those reporting that they had or cared for children were included in the analysis. All respondents whose youngest child was aged under 7 were included in the analysis because Sure Start services are aimed at the under 4s and, at the time of the survey, the programme had been running for three years.

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS).

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## Chapter 3

### Results

#### 3.1 Introduction

A total of 447 questionnaires were sent out, 421 people in the sample drawn from the target population, 14 parents who participated in the pilot and 12 parents who requested a questionnaire following the publicity about the survey. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of questionnaires sent and of eligible families on the Sure Start database by postcode. There is a good match between the proportions in the sample and the actual distribution of eligible families.

**Table 3.1** Percentage distribution by postcode of questionnaires sent and eligible families within the Sure Start area.

Postcode area	% of questionnaires sent	% of eligible families on database
WA8 4	29	28
WA8 7	27	27
WA8 8	44	45
	100	100

Of the 447 sent out, just over a third (149) were returned. Four of these were excluded from the analysis as they reported that they did not have, or care for, children and so were not eligible for Sure Start services. All of the remaining 145 either had, or cared, for children, and were eligible to access Sure Start services between 2000-2003, as in each case the youngest child was aged under 7.

These 145 valid responses gave a response rate of 32%, sufficient to draw conclusions from the survey about the Sure Start area.

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As all respondents did not reply to all of the questions there are differences in total numbers and percentages throughout the analysis. The total number of those responding is given in each case.

When reviewing the results it should be noted that the numbers in some categories are small.

### 3.2 Where the respondents lived

Questionnaires were sent to the postcode areas in proportion with the distribution of eligible families in those areas. For 15 (10%) of the completed questionnaires the postcode was not known. The postcode of those responding is shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Where the respondents lived**

Sure Start postcode areas	Number of responses	% of responses
WA8 4	48	33
WA8 7	32	22
WA8 8	50	34
Postcode not known	15	10
Total	145	100

Considering only those questionnaires where the postcode was known, there were differences in the response rates between the areas:

- in WA8 4\*, 39% (48) of people who received questionnaires replied;
- in WA8 7\*, 29% (32) of people who received questionnaires replied;
- in WA8 8\*, 27% (50) of people who received questionnaires replied.



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However, these differences were not large enough to be significant and would not affect comparisons between postcode areas.

### **3.3 Age, gender and marital status of respondents**

A breakdown of the ages of respondents is given below:

- Under 20 years, 1% (2 people);
- 20-24 years, 24% (35 people);
- 25-29 years, 26% (37 people);
- 30-34 years, 25% (36 people);
- 35 years and over, 23% (34 people);
- Age not known, 1% (1 person).

At the time of the survey, the Sure Start programme had been running for three years and during that period there were 10 respondents (7%) who had been 'teenage mums', i.e. aged under 20.

Of the eight 'teenage mums' whose postcode was known, the largest proportion, 63% (5 people), came from postcode area WA8 8\*, with 13% (1 person) from WA8 4\* and 25% (2 people) from WA8 7\*.

The majority (141 out of 144) of those responding were female and 49 (34%) were single parents, two being single fathers. The sex of one respondent was not known.

### **3.4 The number of children for whom respondents were responsible**

Eight out of every ten respondents (117 people) had, or cared for, one or two children. Two respondents (1%) were pregnant at the time of the survey and one respondent did not record the ages of her/his children, so the number of children in the family could not be calculated. Further detail on the size of families is given in Table 1 in Appendix 2.

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Additionally ten of the respondents (7%) were caring for a disabled child. All ten were female and two were single parents.

### **3.5 Knowledge and overall use of Sure Start services**

A high percentage of the respondents, 92% (134 people), said that they knew there were Sure Start services in the area.

The detachable prize draw sheet provided the opportunity for those replying to ask for more information about the Sure Start services available. Of the 145 people who returned questionnaires, 39 people (27%) requested further information about the Sure Start services in the area.

Table 3.5 shows that overall there was a high level of use of Sure Start services amongst the 145 people who replied, with nearly nine out of every ten saying that they had used Sure Start services.

Respondents could use Sure Start services in different ways (see 3.6 for detail) The pattern of use for 6 people (4%) was not known.

**Table 3.5 Use of Sure Start services**

Used Sure Start services	Number	%
Yes	128	88
No	11	8
Not known	6	4
Total	145	100

Eleven of the 145 people, (8%), who responded said that they had not used any Sure Start services at all. Of those whose postcode was known, (8 people):

- 10% (5 people) of those in WA8 8\* did not use Sure Start;
- 4% (3 people) of those in WA8 4\* did not use Sure Start;
- 3% (1 person) of those in WA8 7\* did not use Sure Start.

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Of the respondents with a disabled child, 20% (2 people) reported that they did not use Sure Start services at all, compared to 7% (9 people) of respondents with no disability in the family.

There were no marked differences in use of Sure Start services with respect to age, being a single parent or the size of family.

All of the respondents who were, or had been, 'teenage mums' (10 people) during the Sure Start programme, said they had used Sure Start services.

### **3.6 How people used the Sure Start services and support**

Eligible families could access the Sure Start services in different ways:

- through community based services (defined as those 35 services listed on the questionnaire);
- in their own homes;
- informally for advice.

Some of the community based services may, on occasions, be delivered at home.

Of the 145 respondents:

- 123 (85%) had used community based services;
- 61 (42%) had used services in their own homes;
- 58 (40%) had informally accessed advice from Sure Start, either by telephone or by speaking personally to Sure Start staff.

(Percentages do not add up to 100% as people could access the services in more than one way.)

As people did not access the services in one way only, Figure 3.6 gives a breakdown of the mixed use that respondents made of the services and support. Using community services in combination with the other access modes was the most used

approach. Only 5 people (3%) accessed Sure Start without using at least one of the listed services.

**Figure 3.6 Breakdown of the different ways that people accessed Sure Start services and support**

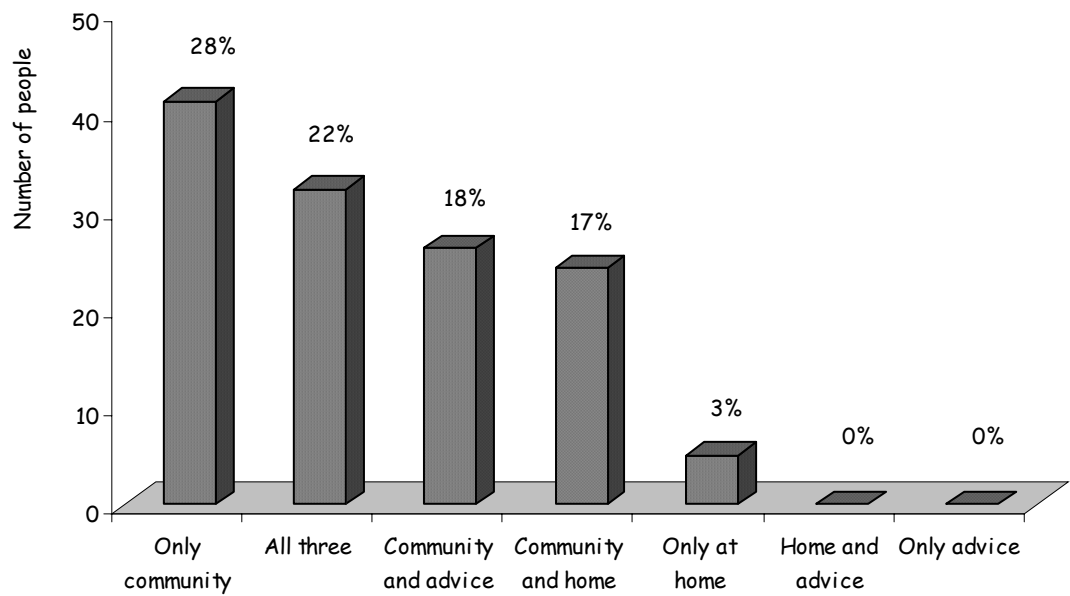


Table 2 in Appendix 2 gives a breakdown of the numbers of people accessing the services in different ways.

### 3.7 Differences between users and non-users of Sure Start services

When reviewing the differences between users and non-users of services, it should be noted that the numbers in some categories are small.

#### 3.7.1 Community based services

Of those whose postcode was known:

- 17% (8 people) of those in WA8 4\* did not use community services;
- 12% (6 people) of those in WA8 8\* did not use community services;
- 6% (2 person) of those in WA8 7\* did not use community services.

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Users of the community based services did not differ from non-users with respect to: age, their marital status, the number of children in their family or whether or not there was a disabled child in the family.

### **3.7.2 Services at home**

When comparing across the postcode areas, WA8 8\* had the highest proportion of residents not using services at home. Of those whose postcode was known:

- 48% (23 people) of those in WA8 4\* did not use services at home;
- 50% (16 people) of those in WA8 7\* did not use services at home;
- 56% (28 people) of those in WA8 8\* did not use services at home.

Those with larger families made more use of services at home:

- 46% (27 people) of those with 1 child used services at home;
- 37% (19 people) of those with 2 children used services at home;
- 53% (8 people) of those with 3 children used services at home;
- 50% (3 people) of those with 4 children used services at home;
- 67% (2 people) of those with 5 children used services at home.

(Family size was known for 59 of the 61 respondents using services at home.)

Of those with disabled children, 70% (7 people) did not use services at home, compared to 55% (69 people) of those with no disabled children. There were no differences with respect to age and marital status.

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### 3.7.3 Informal advice

Amongst those whose use of Sure Start for informal advice was known, there were the following differences between those who did and those who did not seek informal advice.

- 50% (1 person) of those aged under 20 years and 59% (38 people) of those aged 25-34 years used Sure Start for informal advice, compared to 33% (10 people) aged 20-24 years and 27% (9 people) aged 35 and over;
- 43% (51 people) of those with smaller families (3 or less children) accessed Sure Start for informal advice, compared to 83% (5 people) of those with 4 children and 67% (2 people) of those with 5 children;
- 80% (8 people) of those with disabled children had not used Sure Start for informal advice compared to 48% (63 people) of those with no disabled children.

There were no differences with respect to postcode area or marital status.

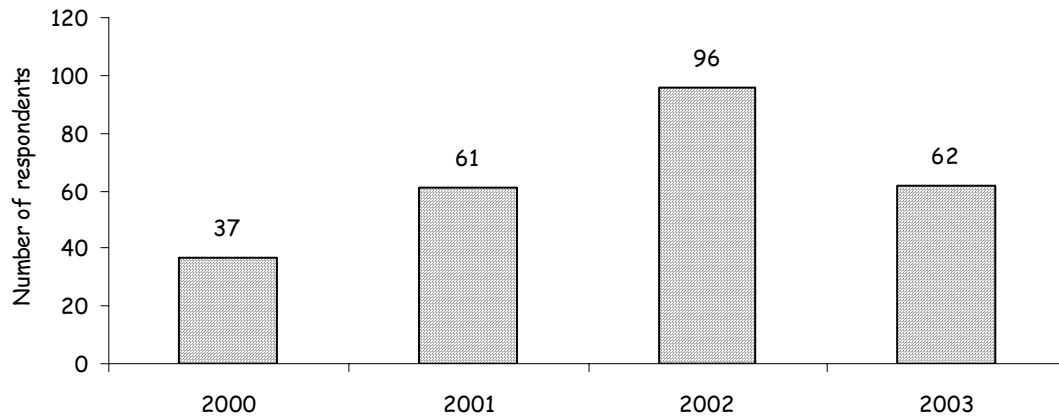
### 3.8 The number of people using the services between 2000 and 2003

Table 3.8 shows that the number of people reporting using Sure Start had risen each year, from 37 in 2000 to 96 in 2002. The survey was undertaken in February 2003, so the figure for 2003 is for two months only.

Table 3.8 illustrates the increase in numbers of people using the services overall for the period 2000-2003.

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**Table 3.8 The number of people using the services between 2000 and 2003**



Of the 145 respondents:

- 15% (22 people) were 'long-term' users, reporting that they had used Sure Start in each of the four years, 2000-2003;
- 30% (43 people) reported using Sure Start in only one of the four years, 2000-2003.

Table 3 in Appendix 2 gives details of the number of years respondents used Sure Start services.

### **3.9 How many community services respondents used**

Of the total of 123 respondents who reported using the community based services:

- 59% (72 people) used between 1 and 5 of the community based services;
- 32% (39 people) used between 6 and 10 of the community based services;
- 10 % (12 people) used more than 10 of the community based services.

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Table 4 in Appendix 2 gives the breakdown of the actual numbers of services used by all respondents.

The proportions of people using more than ten of the community services within each postcode area did not differ significantly from that reported overall (10%). WA8 7\* had the highest proportion of residents reporting that they only used one to five of the services (70%, 21 people), compared to 53% (21 people) in WA8 4\* and 55% (24 people) in WA8 8\*.

Table 5 in Appendix 2 gives full details of the variations in the number of services used across the postcode areas.

The following additional differences amongst those reporting how many community services they used were observed:

- 50% (1 person) of those aged under 20 reported using more than ten, no other age group had more than 11% using more than 10;
- 5% (2 people) of single parents reported using more than ten, compared to 12% (10 people) who were not single parents;
- 100% (8 people) of respondents with disabled children reported using between one and nine community services, compared with 89% (101 people) of those with no disabled children.

It should be noted that in some instances the numbers involved in these observations on the number of community services used are small.

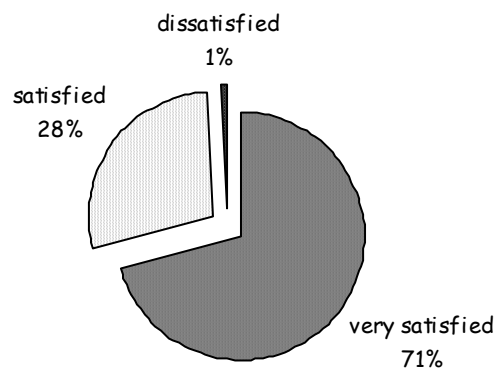
### **3.10 Overall level of satisfaction with all Sure Start services**

The level of satisfaction with Sure Start services was known for 113 of those who replied. Of these, 71% (80 people) were very satisfied with the services and only 1 person (1%) was dissatisfied. The reported level of satisfaction with Sure Start services used is illustrated in Figure 3.10.



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**Figure 3.10**                      **Satisfaction with the services used**



### **3.11 Level of satisfaction amongst those people who used Sure Start services in their own home**

A total of 61 people reported using Sure Start services in their own home and of those:

- 80% (49 people) said the services were 'very helpful';
- 16% (10 people) said they were 'helpful';
- the 'helpfulness' or otherwise for the remaining 2 people (3%) was not known.

### **3.12 Use of and satisfaction with community services**

For the purposes of reviewing the patterns of use of and levels of satisfaction with the community based Sure Start services, the 35 services listed in the questionnaire have been divided into four groups based on the known level of use of each service.

The four groups were ranked by the percentage of respondents who used them, as follows:

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Group 1: services used at least once by 20% to 50% of respondents (eight services)

- Child Safety Equipment hire
- Fundays & Events
- Garden Equipment/Skip hire
- Toy Library
- Pampering Group
- Adult Learning
- B4 4 Crèche
- Cook & Taste.

Group 2: services used at least once by 11% to 19% of respondents (ten services)

- Baby Massage
- CAB
- Creepy Crawlies
- Early Learning Group
- Portage Home Visiting
- 40 Month Check
- Behaviour Support
- Halton Family Group
- Decorate Your Nursery
- Someone To Talk To.

Group 3: services used at least once by 6% to 10% of respondents (nine services)

- Family Reading Group
- Feel Good Group
- Nutrition
- Sleep Clinic
- Breastfeeding Support
- Pre-school Support
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Top Tots
- Musical Mayhem.

Group 4: services used at least once by 5% or less of respondents (eight services)

- Being a Parent
- Learn Through Play
- Adult Study Group
- Chatterbox
- Dads & Kids Swimming
- ARCH

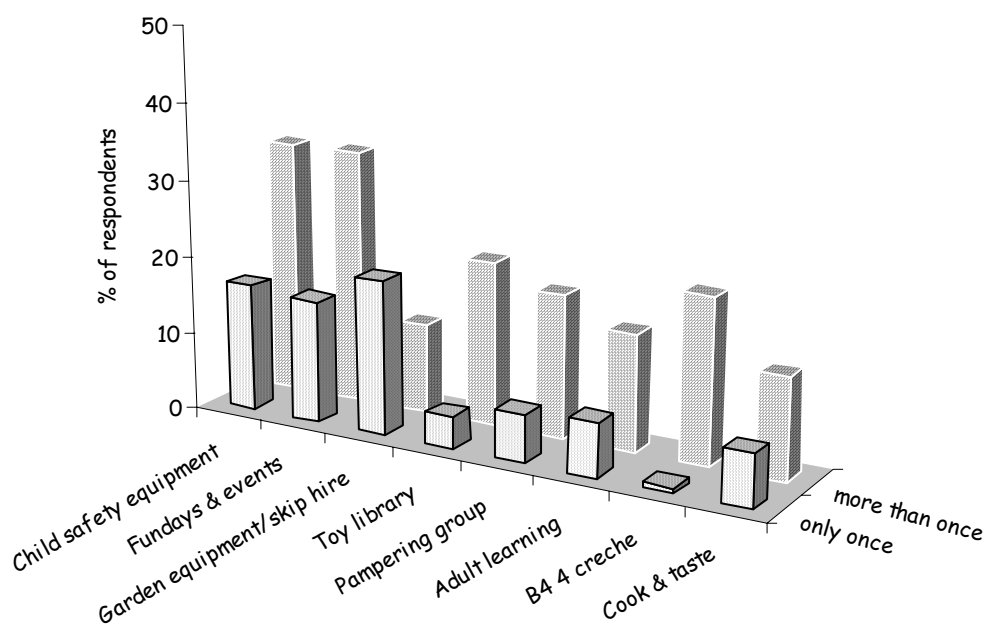
- Pregnant Mums Quit Smoking
- Webster Stratton Group.

Table 6 in Appendix 2 gives full details on the use of services. Table 7 gives details on the level of satisfaction amongst those using services.

### 3.13 Use of and satisfaction with Group 1 community based services

These were the most popular of the community based services, with between 20% and 50% of respondents using them at least once. The pattern of use of each of the services in this group is illustrated in Figure 3.13.1.

**Figure 3.13.1** Level of use of the community based services in Group 1

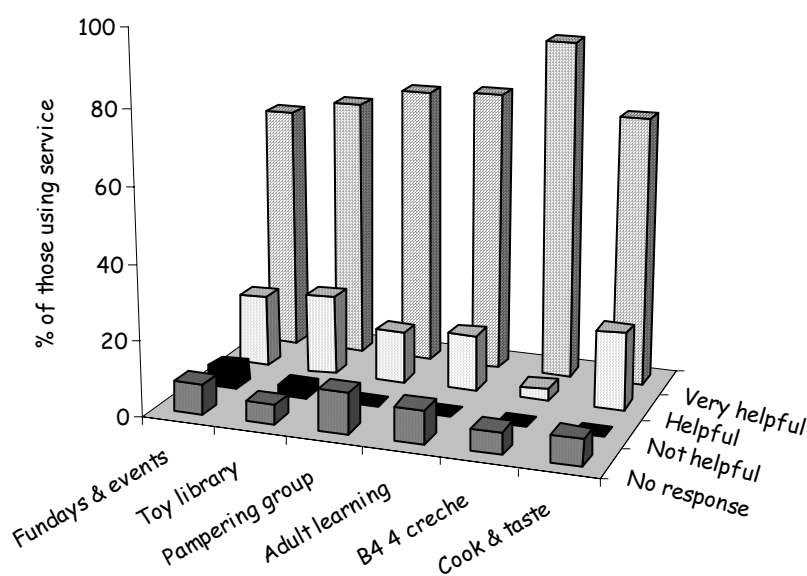


There were some differences in the patterns of use within the group:

- the Garden Equipment hire was the only service in this group where the proportion of 'only once' users (21%) was greater than the proportion of 'repeat' users (12%);
- the Toy Library had a low proportion of 'only once' users (4%) compared to the proportion who used it 'more than once' (23%);
- the B4 4 Crèche also had a low proportion of 'only once' users (1%) compared to the proportion who used it 'more than once' (23%).

The levels of satisfaction with this group of services overall were high. The Child Safety Equipment and the Garden Equipment hire services were 'very useful/useful' for 91% of those who used them. Figure 3.12.2 shows how 'helpful' users found the other six services in this group.

**Figure 3.13.2** How 'helpful' users found six of the eight community based services in Group 1



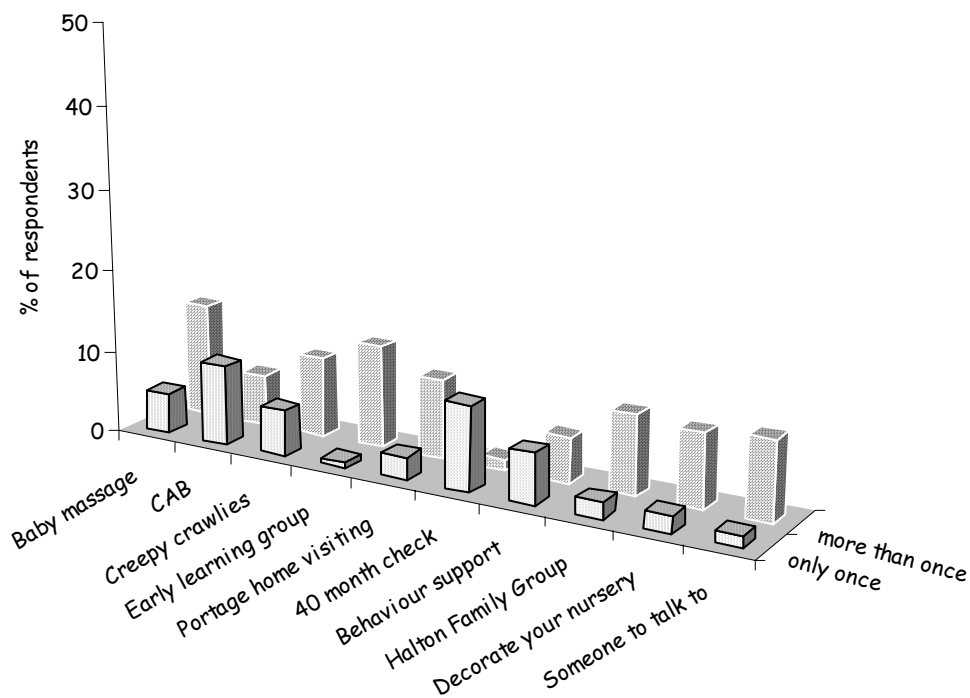
(The two equipment hire services are excluded from this figure as respondents were asked how 'useful', rather than 'helpful', they had found them.)

- Four people (6%) who attended Fundays and Events said that they were 'not helpful'.

### 3.14 Use of and satisfaction with Group 2 community based services

The services in Group 2 were used at least once by between 11% and 19% of the 145 respondents. The pattern of use of each of the services in this group is illustrated in Figure 3.14.1.

**Figure 3.14.1** Level of use of the community based services in Group 2



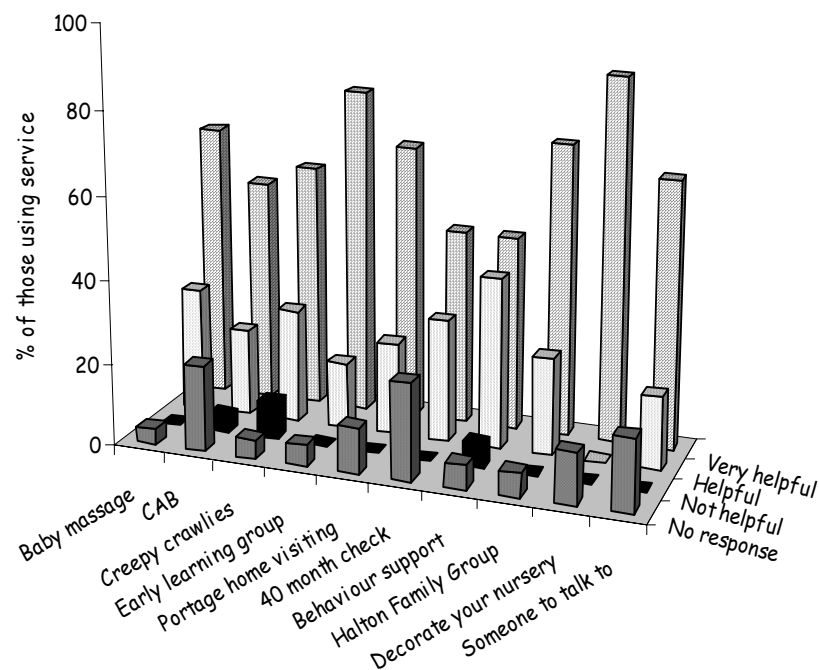
Differences in the pattern of use within this Group were:

- eight of the ten services had more repeat users than 'only once' users;
- the CAB, the 40 Month Check and Behaviour Support services had a higher proportion of 'only once' users compared to 'more than once' users;

- the 40 Month Check was used by 13% of those replying, (2% 'more than once' and 11% 'only once'). It is estimated that 81 respondents (56%) could have been eligible for the 40 months check. This estimate assumes that any child aged between 3 and 6 years at the time of the survey could have been aged 40 months whilst the Sure Start programme had been operating.

Levels of satisfaction amongst the users of this group of services was high, with over three quarters of respondents reporting that they had found services either 'very helpful' or 'helpful'. Figure 3.14.2 illustrates level of satisfaction for each of the services in Group 2.

**Figure 3.14.2** How 'helpful' users found the community based services in Group 2



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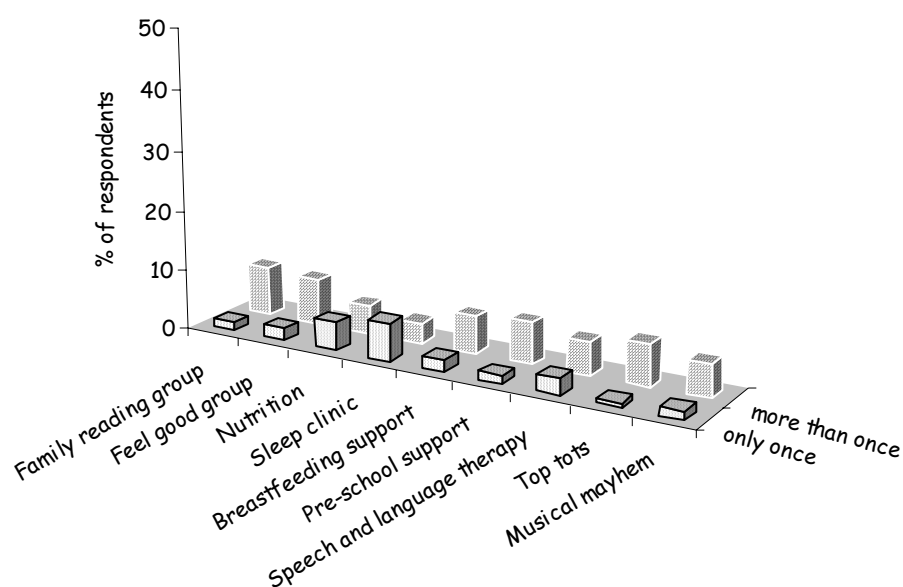
There were three services reported as 'not helpful' by a small number of people.

- 2 people using Creepy Crawlies (9%) found it 'not helpful';
- 1 person using Behaviour Support (6%) found it 'not helpful';
- 1 person using CAB (4%) found it 'not helpful'.

### 3.15 Use of and satisfaction with Group 3 community based services

The services in Group 3 were used at least once by between 6% and 10% of the 145 respondents (10 to 14 people). Any consideration of these results needs to take into account the relatively low numbers of respondents using these services. The pattern of use of each of the services in this group is illustrated in Figure 3.15.1.

**Figure 3.15.1 Level of use of the community based services in Group 3**



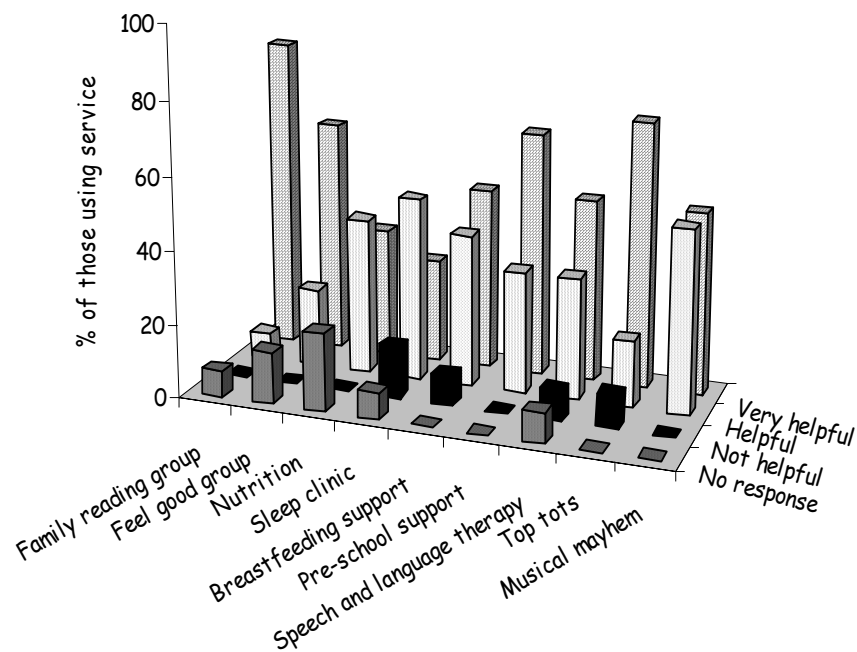
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Differences in the pattern of use within this Group were:

- the Sleep Clinic was the only service in this group where the proportion of 'only once' users (7%) was greater than the proportion of 'repeat' users (4%);
- the Family Reading Group had a low proportion (1%) of 'only once' users compared to the proportion of 'more than once' users (9%).

People using the services in Group 3 generally found them of value, with over 80% saying that they were 'very helpful' or 'helpful'. Figure 3.15.2 illustrates level of satisfaction for each of the services in Group 3.

**Figure 3.15.2**      **How 'helpful' users found the community based services in Group 3**





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A small number of users said that the following services were 'not helpful' for them:

- the Sleep Clinic, 2 people (14% of users);
- Speech and Language Therapy, 1 person (9% of users);
- Top Tots, 1 person (8% of users);
- Breastfeeding Support, 1 person (8% of users).

The proportion of users rating the Nutrition Service and the Sleep Clinic as 'helpful' was greater than the proportion rating them 'very helpful'. With all the other services in this group, the proportions of users rating them 'very helpful' was the same or greater than the proportions rating them 'helpful'.

### **3.16 Use of and satisfaction with Group 4 community based services**

These services were the least used of the 35 listed on the questionnaire. For each service, 5% or less of those replying (fewer than 7 people) said that they had used the service 'at least once'. All services had been used at some time with ARCH, Pregnant Mums Quit Smoking and the Webster Stratton Group being used 'at least once' by only 1 person (1% of all those responding).

The numbers of people who reported using these services were small. The maximum was seven people for 'Being a Parent'. Three services (ARCH, Pregnant Mums Quit Smoking and the Webster Stratton Group) were each used by one person.

ARCH, the Pregnant Mums Quit Smoking service and the Webster Stratton Group were rated as 'helpful' by the people who used them. The other five services in the group were rated as 'very helpful' / 'helpful'.

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### 3.17 Comments about Sure Start services

A total of 81 people (56% of respondents) commented about Sure Start services and 40 of those made more than one comment. Overall 156 comments were received. A complete list of all the comments is given in Appendix 3.

Four key themes emerged from these comments:

- the positive experiences respondents had (77 comments);
- issues about the organisation and delivery of services (55 comments);
- the need for more information about services (37 comments);
- the identification by respondents of future action in relation to Sure Start services (26 comments). Most said they intended to use services more, however two people indicated that they intended not to use services again.

The comments below are illustrative of these four themes. The number in brackets is an anonymised person number.

#### 3.17.1 Positive experiences

45 people (31%) made 77 comments about their positive experience of Sure Start and how they and their children had benefited from involvement with the services. Comments relating to Sure Start overall:

*'I think all the services we have used are very helpful and very child centred. There is a good range of services - age appropriate - and the staff are friendly and helpful. We have benefited from being Sure Start members.'* (5).

*'Sure Start has helped me a lot. I am very pleased and would tell anybody the same.'* (26).

*'The Ditton Sure Start team have a really good sense of the community. The services are excellent and the staff are really helpful.'* (53).

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*'Sure Start is excellent for both children and parents. The events and groups organised for the children have been excellent in encouraging child development. Keep up the good work! ' (137).*

*'It is just nice to know that if you need someone or somewhere to go there is always someone or something there to do.' (146).*

Others commented about how specific services had been valuable for them and/or their children:

*'Pampering group - excellent opportunity to pamper yourself and know that children are being looked after as well as a great opportunity to talk to other mums.' (16).*

*'Decorate your own nursery gave me confidence. Now I make home furnishings for friends and family.' (31).*

*'My son loved early learning group and so did I. The staff were very helpful and kind.' (44).*

*'I found chatterbox very helpful for both my child and myself. My son was a very slow talker but chatterbox help improve quickly.' (64).*

*'Cook and taste classes are brilliant as I'm not much of a cook! But now I'm on maternity leave I have more time at home, so I can make the most of the things I've been taught. My husband looks forward to the new dish of the week! ' (65).*

When commenting about services seventeen people took the opportunity of expressing their thanks. For example:

*'Sure Start helped me to enrol for college and I would like to say a big thank you to all the girls for their help and support in getting me where I am today.' (60).*

*'It is a fantastic help and the staff are excellent, thank you for your help.' (111).*

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### 3.17.2 Organisational issues

With regard to organisational issues, 15 people (10% of respondents) commented on the problem of working and being unable to access the services:

*'I'm a working mum so most things are on while I am at work. When I was on maternity leave I took my youngest son to a group and found it useful to meet other people and talk 'babytalk'. The children were different ages but that is useful as children watch and learn from each other. Thanks.'* (52).

*'The reason I have not used all the groups is that I work and all the groups are done in the mornings or afternoon, none are at night.'* (85).

*'There are a large group of single 'working' parents locally, who do not receive benefits etc... We need support with weekend events, sports activities, family fun etc... We also struggle at times with support... but are forgotten and overlooked.'* (113).

Six respondents commented about how access to services was limited by age of child and five regretted that some people could not access the services because of where they lived. For example:

*'Sure Start could do with changing the age to 0 - school age. Some children don't start school until five.'* (6).

*'I can't praise Sure Start enough. It is certainly helping me to enjoy my baby as I can structure each day with a regular routine. The staff and courses available have always been helpful and have encouraged me to have more confidence with my baby. I am happy he is 'meeting' other babies as I'm sure it will help him to be more sociable and less clingy. The only negative thing I can say is that it's a shame it's not available to everyone irrespective of where they live/catchment area. I'm so glad I live in the right area.'* (65).

The overwhelming majority of comments about Sure Start staff were positive, with only three people commenting that they had found staff, in some way, unsatisfactory. All three felt that they were being 'talked down to' and two indicated that they would not use services as a result. For example :

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*'Because of the patronising and condescending manner the services were presented to me in the first instance, with the assumption that because my address fell within a Sure Start area, I must automatically be deprived, I was predisposed to avoid any participation in any of the services offered. I can see whom the services are aimed at but remain unconvinced that I require the assistance of 'the Sure Start team' in achieving the right start in life for my children. Nor do I seek the camaraderie of those target parents who may choose to benefit from the services. I have no desire to win £100 worth of Asda vouchers as I avoid the place like the plague.'* (73).

Four people's comments indicated that they felt they were 'on a waiting list' for a service. The services were Speech and Language, Behavioural Support (2 people) and the Webster Stratton Group.

### **3.17.3 More information about services**

There were 24 people (17% of respondents) who indicated that they personally would like more information about services or that they did not realise how many services were available. For example:

*'I wasn't aware of all the services that Sure Start provides. I will certainly look into some of these in the future.'* (18).

*'Sure Start is a brilliant idea. If I had been aware of it earlier I would have taken my son before he went to nursery. I only found out about it in September '02. May you carry on your good work for many years to come.'* (95).

*'I didn't know about all these services. Perhaps we should have more information about the services that are provided.'* (126).

Two respondents commented that the questionnaire was the first information that they had received about services.

One person suggested that more promotion of services was needed as he/she knew that other people did not know about Sure Start:

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*'Hope it continues but better promotion is needed as lots of friends or colleagues don't know of it.'* (66).

#### **3.17.4 Future action in relation to Sure Start**

The process of responding to the questionnaire prompted 18 people (12%) to indicate an intention to action, positive and negative, in relation to Sure Start.

For example:

*'Arranged skip hire but it never turned up. I went to 1 fun day and the attitude of the organisers was disgusting because of the speaking down to me like I am stupid. I won't be going to another one.'* (109).

*'Need to make appointment for pre-school for my child and 40 month.'* (40).

*'My fella would like to go to the dads 'n kids swimming.'* (69).

*'Would like to be involved in the nutrition class.'* (135).

*'I found these groups excellent as they increased my child's confidence and encouraged her to be more aware of herself and other children. I would definitely continue to use these groups and encourage others to do so. I would also consider attending other groups.'* (137).

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## **Chapter 4**

### **Discussion**

#### **4.1 The design of the survey and the sample**

Postal questionnaires can have limitations in as much as those completing and returning the questionnaire may not be representative of the population as a whole and response rates can be low.

Steps were taken to seek a representative sample of the target population which was parents or carers of children aged under 4 between 2000 and 2003 who were living in the Sure Start area and thus eligible to use the services.

The majority of the respondents (98%) were female. All except one, was under 48 years old and 24% were aged under 25. 34% of the respondents were single parents. This is comparable to 32%, the average of the rates for 1994 - 1998 in the five wards in which the programme is located (Graham, 2001). 7% (10 people) were teenage mums in the period 2000-2003 and of these the largest proportion (63%) lived in WA8 8\*.

As a high percentage (88%) of those who replied said that they had used Sure Start services, these characteristics may be more representative of service users than of the Sure Start population as a whole. There could be other characteristics of those who did not respond which may reduce the representativeness of the sample. This, and the small number of responses in some categories, need to be considered when reviewing the results of the survey.

#### **4.2 Knowledge and use of Sure Start services**

Overall there was a high level of knowledge and use of the Sure Start programme, with 92% of respondents saying that they were aware of services in the area and 88% reporting that they had used services.

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Whilst the level of knowledge of the existence of Sure Start services was high, there were indications that a significant proportion of respondents did not have as much information about the range and detail of services as they would have liked. 27% of those returning a questionnaire ticked the optional box requesting more information about services. 17% of respondents indicated in the comments they made that they felt there was a need for more information about all of the services.

Additionally, comments made indicated that the process of completing the questionnaire had increased people's knowledge about the range of services and that this had prompted them to look to using services more.

The numbers of people reporting that they had used Sure Start services had risen since the beginning of the programme, from a total of 37 in 2000 to 62 in the first two months of 2003.

#### **4.3 Who was using and not using the services**

All of the teenage mums had used Sure Start. Of those with disabled children, 20% said that they had not used Sure Start, this compared to only 7% of families with no disabled children.

Those living in WA8 8\* had the highest proportion of residents (10%) not using Sure Start, compared to 4% of WA8 4\* residents and 3% of WA8 7\* residents. Overall the numbers in these categories were small as only 11 people reported that they had not used Sure Start at all.

Use of the community based services listed in the questionnaire was the most favoured way of accessing Sure Start services, with 85% of those replying saying that they had used at least one of the services listed at least once. Those living in WA8 4\* (the postcode to the north of the Sure Start area) made least use of the



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community services, with 17% of residents reporting that they had not used any, compared to 6% in WA8 7\* and 12% in WA8 8\*.

There was a different pattern of use with respect to services in the home. With this type of use of service, the area with least use was WA8 8\* with 56% of residents saying that they had never had services at home. The levels for WA8 7\* and WA8 4\* were 50% and 48% respectively. This may reflect an actual difference in service use or it may be a difference in perception of what a Sure Start service at home is. For example, the 40 Month Check had been available before the Sure Start programme was initiated and, whilst they are now linked with the Sure Start programme, users may not have associated them with the Sure Start programme.

Whilst having a disabled child did not appear to influence the use that was made of community based services, those with disabled children accessed services at home and informally for advice less than those with no disabled children. Seven out of ten of those respondents with a disabled child did not use services in the home, compared to 55% of those with no disabled children. 80% of those with a disabled child had not used the service informally for advice, whereas 48% of those with no disabled children had asked Sure Start staff for informal advice. The reasons for these differences were not investigated in the survey.

The size of a respondent's family did not appear to influence their use of the community based services. However, those with larger families did make proportionately more use of services in their home and for informal advice.

There were variations in the characteristics of those using different numbers of community based services, but no significant differences were observed. In some instances numbers involved were small, making it difficult to interpret variations.

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#### 4.4 Satisfaction with services

For the baseline 'Health Needs Assessment' on the Widnes Sure Start area undertaken in 2001 (Graham et al, 2001)<sup>1</sup>, a telephone survey of users of Sure Start services was undertaken to assess the level of satisfaction with services at an early stage of the programme. Of the 44 female users interviewed, 73% (32 people) were 'very satisfied' and 27% (12 people) were 'satisfied' with Sure Start services.

These high levels of overall satisfaction with Sure Start services are similar to those observed in this survey with 71% of respondents (80 people) being 'very satisfied' and 28% (32 people) being 'satisfied'. With regard to services at home, satisfaction was higher, with 80% saying that they had found the services 'very helpful' and 16% saying they had been 'helpful'.

This survey also reviewed the levels of use of, and satisfaction with, individual services. Generally, services were valued by those using them. Only ten of the 35 services had anyone reporting that they had found the service 'not useful' or 'not helpful'. For seven of these services there was only one person reporting dissatisfaction. The remaining three were:

- Fundays and Events, with 6% of users (4 people) saying that the service was 'not helpful';
- Creepy Crawlies, with 9% of users (2 people) saying that the service was 'not helpful';
- Sleep Clinic, with 14% of users (2 people) saying that the service was 'not helpful'.

The most used services were:

- Child Safety Equipment Hire;

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<sup>1</sup> Graham, J. & Thurston, M. (2001). *Widnes Sure Start Health Needs Assessment Phase 1 - Baseline*. CPHR

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- Fundays & Events;
  - Garden Equipment/Skip Hire;
  - Toy Library;
  - Pampering Group;
  - Adult Learning;
  - B4 4 Crèche;
  - Cook & Taste.

The levels of satisfaction with these was high. The Child Safety and Garden Equipment Hire services were rated as 'very useful or useful' by 91% of respondents. With each of the remaining services over 86% of respondents said that the services were 'very helpful or helpful'.

The services that were used at least once by between 11% and 19% of respondents were:

- Baby Massage
- CAB
- Creepy Crawlies
- Early Learning Group
- Portage Home Visiting
- 40 Month Check
- Behaviour Support
- Halton Family Group
- Decorate Your Nursery
- Someone To Talk To.

Three quarters of those of those using CAB and the 40 Month Check said that they were 'very helpful or helpful'. Each of the remaining eight were rated as 'very helpful or helpful' by 82% or more by those using these services, with Baby

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Massage, the Early Learning Group and the Halton Family Group being rated 'very helpful/helpful' by 94% or more of those using each of these services.

The remaining two groups were the services least used, with 10% or less of respondents using any of them. Again, significant proportions (between 75% and 100%) of those who used each of these services reported that they were 'very helpful/helpful'. As the numbers of people who used any one of these services was small, within the range one to fourteen, care must be taken in reviewing the levels of satisfaction.

The low level of use of these services could be related to:

- the length of time a service had been offered, with more recently introduced services having lower use (this analysis does not take into account how long different services had been operating at the time of the survey);
- the specialist nature of a service;
- the knowledge of the service within the community.
- perception of the extent to which a service would help meet needs.

#### **4.5 Comments about Sure Start services**

Respondents were invited to comment about the services they used. The comments reinforced the overall level of satisfaction amongst those using services. They also illustrated that there are issues which can restrict access to services, e.g. being in employment, where people live and the age of their children. The comments also showed that, even amongst those who used services, there was a lack of knowledge about the range of services provided by Sure Start and that information about services should be more widely available.

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## 4.6 Conclusions

The use of Sure Start services has increased each year since the programme began. There is a high level of satisfaction with Sure Start services overall, with individual services amongst those who have used them and even with services that are used by relatively few people.

Although there is a high level of knowledge of the existence of the Sure Start programme, there appears to be a need to provide more detailed information on the range and type of services available.

People principally use the community based services as a means of accessing Sure Start. There were variations by postcode in the way services were used. Those living in postcode are WA8 8\* made least use of services overall.

There is an indication that those who have or care for disabled children make less use of Sure Start, although reasons for this were not explored.

The majority of comments made about the services were very positive and reinforced the high overall level of satisfaction amongst those using services. The comments also illustrated that there are issues which can restrict access to services, e.g. being in employment, where people live and the age of their children. The comments also showed that, even amongst those who used services, there was a lack of knowledge about the range of services provided by Sure Start.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **The questionnaire, the detachable prize draw entry and the reminder letter.**

The questionnaire and the detachable prize draw entry can be found in the  
wallet on the inside back cover.

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...working with  *SureStart*

Dear

It's not too late -  
you can still be entered into the

## **Free Prize Draw**

### **£100 worth of ASDA vouchers to be won**

A couple of weeks ago, we sent you a questionnaire about  *SureStart* services. We don't seem to have had a reply from you. Perhaps you haven't had time to fill it in or it's been lost. Whatever the reason, we would still like to hear from you.

We have extended the closing date to 15<sup>th</sup> March, so you still have time to fill in the questionnaire and be entered into the Prize Draw to win ASDA vouchers. We've included a questionnaire, the entry form for the Prize Draw and a Freepost envelope with this letter, so please do send it in.

If you have already replied and our letters have crossed in the post, we are sorry to have bothered you.

Thank you again for your help.

*Marjorie Barrow*

Marjorie Barrow  
Researcher

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## Appendix 2

### Tables with additional information

Table 1	Breakdown of the number of children for whom respondents were responsible
Table 2	Breakdown of the numbers of people accessing the services in different ways
Table 3	The number of years in which respondents had used Sure Start
Table 4	Detail of how many community services the respondents used
Table 5	Number of community services used by postcode
Table 6	How many respondents used the community services listed on the questionnaire
Table 7	How useful or helpful the community services were for those who used them

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**Table 1** Breakdown of the number of children for whom respondents were responsible.

Number of children	Number of responses	% of responses
0	3	2
1	64	44
2	53	37
3	16	11
4	6	4
5	3	2
Total	145	100

**Table 2** Breakdown of the numbers of people accessing the services in different ways.

Type of service used	Number	% of all respondents
Only community	41	28
All three	32	22
Community and advice	26	18
Community and home	24	17
Not at all	11	8
Not known	6	4
Only at home	5	3
Home and advice	0	0
Only advice	0	0
Total	145	100

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**Table 3      The number of years in which respondents had used Sure Start**

Number of years used Sure Start	Number	Percent
1	43	30
2	40	28
3	15	10
4	22	15
Not known	25	17
Total	145	100

**Table 4      Detail of how many community services the respondents used**

Number of community services used	Frequency	% of respondents
0	22	15
1	15	10
2	17	12
3	16	11
4	13	9
5	11	8
6	6	4
7	4	3
8	9	6
9	12	8
10	8	6
11	3	2
12	3	2
13	2	1
14	1	1
16	1	1
17	2	1
Total	145	100

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**Table 5      Number of community services used by postcode**

<b>SS postal areas</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>WA8 4*</b>	<b>1-5</b>	21	53
	<b>6-10</b>	14	35
	<b>more than 10</b>	5	13
	<b>Total</b>	40	100
<b>WA8 7*</b>	<b>1-5</b>	21	70
	<b>6-10</b>	6	20
	<b>more than 10</b>	3	10
	<b>Total</b>	30	100
<b>WA8 8*</b>	<b>1-5</b>	24	55
	<b>6-10</b>	16	36
	<b>more than 10</b>	4	9
	<b>Total</b>	44	100
<b>Not known</b>	<b>1-5</b>	6	67
	<b>6-10</b>	3	33
	<b>Total</b>	9	100

**Table 6      How many respondents used the community services listed on the questionnaire**

Community Service	Group	% of respondents using the service at least once	Number	% of respondents	Number	% of respondents	Number	% of respondents	Number	% of respondents
			More than once		Only once		Never		No response	
Child safety equipment	1	50	48	34	24	17	68	49	0	0
Fundays & events		49	48	34	23	16	68	49	1	1
Garden equipment/skip hire		32	17	12	29	21	94	67	0	0
Toy library		26	31	23	6	4	99	73	0	0
Pampering group		25	27	20	9	7	100	74	0	0
Adult learning		22	22	16	10	7	104	76	1	1
B4 4 creche		22	31	23	1	1	102	76	1	1
Cook & taste		20	19	14	10	7	108	79	0	0
Baby massage	2	19	20	15	7	5	109	80	0	0
CAB		16	9	7	14	10	110	82	1	1
Creepy crawlies		15	14	10	8	6	112	84	0	0
Early learning group		13	18	13	1	1	117	86	0	0
Portage home visiting		12	14	11	4	3	115	86	0	0
40 month check		12	2	2	15	11	114	87	0	0
Behaviour support		12	8	6	9	7	118	87	0	0
Halton Family Group		12	14	10	3	2	118	87	0	0
Decorate your nursery		11	13	9	3	2	122	88	0	0
Someone to talk to		11	14	10	2	1	119	88	1	1
Family reading group	3	10	12	9	2	1	122	90	0	0
Feel good group		10	11	8	3	2	121	90	0	0
Nutrition		10	7	5	7	5	119	89	1	1
Sleep clinic		10	5	4	9	7	123	90	0	0
Breastfeeding support		8	9	7	3	2	122	91	0	0
Pre-school support		8	10	7	2	1	123	91	0	0
Speech and language therapy		8	8	6	4	3	121	91	0	0
Top tots		8	10	7	1	1	123	92	0	0
Musical mayhem		7	8	6	2	2	122	92	0	0
Being a parent	4	5	3	2	4	3	129	95	0	0
Learn through play		3	4	3	1	1	129	96	0	0
Adult study group		3	4	3	0	0	129	96	1	1
Chatterbox		3	4	3	0	0	129	97	0	0
Dads & kids swimming		3	4	3	0	0	125	97	0	0
ARCH		1	0	0	1	1	133	99	0	0
Pregnant mums quit smoking		1	1	1	0	0	130	99	0	0
Webster Stratton Group		1	0	0	1	1	132	99	0	0

**Table 7      How useful or helpful the community services were for those who used them**

Community service	Group	% of respondents using the service at least once	Very useful		Useful		Not useful		No response		Number using
			Number	% of those using this service	Number	% of those using this service	Number	% of those using this service	Number	% of those using this service	
Child safety equipment	1	50	60	83	6	8	1	1	5	7	72
Garden equipment/skip hire		32	40	87	2	4	0	0	4	9	46
			Very helpful		Helpful		Not helpful		No response		
Fundays & events		49	48	67	14	19	4	6	6	8	72
Toy library		26	26	70	8	22	1	3	2	5	37
Pampering group		25	27	75	5	14	0	0	4	11	36
Adult learning		22	25	76	5	15	0	0	3	9	33
B4 4 creche		22	30	91	1	3	0	0	2	6	33
Cook & taste		20	21	72	6	21	0	0	2	7	29
Baby massage	2	19	18	67	8	30	0	0	1	4	27
CAB		16	13	54	5	21	1	4	5	21	24
Creepy crawlies		15	13	59	6	27	2	9	1	5	22
Early learning group		13	15	79	3	16	0	0	1	5	19
Portage home visiting		12	12	67	4	22	0	0	2	11	18
40 month check		12	8	47	5	29	0	0	4	24	17
Behaviour support		12	8	47	7	41	1	6	1	6	17
Halton Family Group		12	12	71	4	24	0	0	1	6	17
Decorate your nursery		11	14	88	0	0	0	0	2	13	16
Someone to talk to		11	11	65	3	18	0	0	3	18	17
Family reading group	3	10	12	86	1	7	0	0	1	7	14
Feel good group		10	9	64	3	21	0	0	2	14	14
Nutrition		10	5	36	6	43	0	0	3	21	14
Sleep clinic		10	4	29	7	50	2	14	1	7	14
Breastfeeding support		8	6	50	5	42	1	8	0	0	12
Pre-school support		8	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0	12
Speech and language therapy		8	6	50	4	33	1	8	1	8	12
Top tots		8	8	73	2	18	1	9	0	0	11
Musical mayhem		7	5	50	5	50	0	0	0	0	10
Being a parent	4	5	5	71	1	14	0	0	1	14	7
Learn through play		3	3	60	1	20	0	0	1	20	5
Adult study group		3	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Chatterbox		3	3	75	0	0	0	0	1	25	4
Dads & kids swimming		3	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0	4
ARCH		1	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Pregnant mums quit smoking		1	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Webster Stratton Group		1	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	1

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## **Appendix 3**

### **Comments made by respondents**

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## Comments made by respondents

The comments listed below are grouped by the four themes described in paragraph 3.17. Some comments cover more than one theme.

The questionnaire listed the 35 community services in six groups (see Appendix 1) as follows:

- Activities and help for families;
- Support for families;
- For parents;
- Childcare and parenting;
- Early learning;
- Early learning - speech and language.

Respondents had the opportunity to comment on each of these groups and Sure Start service generally. If a respondent's comment relates to a particular group of services that has been indicated in brackets.

### **Positive experiences**

I did some courses with Sure Start and was very pleased, I had stayed in for years with panic attacks and the Sure Start staff helped me so much. It was just a shame that it all ends when your child turns 4 but it was fab while it lasted. (111)

I am very pleased with the services I have used within Sure Start. I think that the age range should be 0-5 years rather than 4 years as some children go to school at 5. (139)

I am very disappointed that Sure Start doesn't include Halebank as I have friends and family which are single parents which would be very helpful to them, it's on the borderline but it's such a small village with lots of young single mums living there I don't see why it couldn't be added. Thanks. (55)

I can't praise Sure Start enough. It is certainly helping me to enjoy my baby as I can structure each day with a regular routine. The staff and courses available have always been helpful and have encouraged me to have more confidence with my baby. I am happy he is 'meeting' other babies as I'm sure it will help him to be more sociable and less clingy. The only negative thing I can say is that it's a shame it's not available to everyone irrespective of where they live/catchment area. I'm so glad I live in the right area. (65)

It is just nice to know that if you need someone or somewhere to go there is always someone or something there to do. (146)

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Pampering group is an excellent way of getting new mums out of the house. I really enjoyed going. I met lots of other mums who gave me advice and tips. Unfortunately I can't attend pampering now because I am working. I never knew there was so much available till filling in this questionnaire. (29)

Staff are extremely nice with the children and parents. We will be going Top Tots in March. (109)

I found these groups (**Early learning**) excellent as they increased my child's confidence and encouraged her to be more aware of herself and other children. I would definitely continue to use these groups and encourage others to do so. I would also consider attending other groups. (137)

Sure Start is very helpful. I am glad I live in the Sure Start area - and will make more use of your services. (10)

Sure Start is excellent and by reading this leaflet there are a lot of groups I didn't know about and plan on using. (24)

I think it is a BRILLIANT scheme. I know I have not used it yet to its full advantage but I do intend to do so. All of the staff are very helpful and supportive. (57)

I've only been to the community centre to buy things that I've needed as yet. As soon as I'm sorted out I'm sure I will be visiting the centre. In any case I would like to thank you very much for the help I get at the moment. (71)

I find Sure Start absolutely fantastic, unfortunately I haven't used all the facilities but I know if I need to it's there and I'm definitely going to try some new ones! (86)

I have only just signed up for the Sure Start a couple of days ago, but will continue to come, after talking to a few parents I think it's a very good service. I will be using all of the services provided in due time. Thank you. (124)

Cook and taste classes are brilliant as I'm not much of a cook! But now I'm on maternity leave I have more time at home, so I can make the most of the things I've been taught. My husband looks forward to the new dish of the week! (65)

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The Halton family groups are great. (6)

My daughter attended early years groups at Widnes and I cannot praise the work high enough! Well done! (66)

Cook and Taste. Enjoyed making the Christmas cakes. And thanks to staff for the Christmas dinner. That was a really great day. (145)

I usually ask the health food worker any questions I have about nutrition. (148)

Sleep clinic - excellent. Now no probs. With twins going to bed in their own beds - controlled crying. (16)

Decorate your own nursery gave me confidence. Now I make home furnishings for friends and family. (31)

Decorate your nursery. Really good, have learnt so much. (145)

Pampering group - excellent opportunity to pamper yourself and know that children are being looked after as well as a great opportunity to talk to other mums. (16)

The baby massage classes helped me to give my baby special quality time. The girls in the crèche are absolutely fantastic. They show a genuine interest in each baby/child which is very reassuring for me as a parent. Pampering group is a treat, but sometimes it's nice to go somewhere just for a chat! (65)

The groups (**Childcare and parenting**) I have used are fantastic and friendly. (70)

Crèche is great. My daughter has really enjoyed been in crèche. (145)

Creepy-crawlies good for lots of physical activities I couldn't provide e.g. parachute, tunnels, big plastic shape sorter etc. (16)

My son loved early learning group and so did I. The staff were very helpful and kind. (44)

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At the moment due to the age and condition of my baby I have had quite a lot of help from Sure Start but that was with people coming to my house to help me. My health visitor is absolutely fantastic, she comes out every week or every other week. She sorts me out and weighs my baby as well as lots of other things. The nursery nurse has been out to help me with weaning. She was very helpful. And finally my portage worker, she is brilliant. I don't know what I would do without her. She helps me and my baby every week and is an asset to Sure Start. (71)

Musical mayhem/ creepy crawlies top tots. All these have been great. My daughter really enjoyed these activities (musical mayhem) was her favourite. (145)

I think all the services (**Early learning - speech and language**) we have used are very helpful and very child centred. There is a good range of services - age appropriate - and the staff are friendly and helpful. We have benefited from being Sure Start members. (5)

Sure Start has helped me a lot. I am very pleased and would tell anybody the same. (26)

I thought the skip hire was VERY helpful and it helped me to clean my gardens up because I could not afford my own. (39)

The Ditton Sure Start team have a really good sense of the community. The services are excellent and the staff are really helpful. (53)

My youngest son was 10 months old at the time and was not using speech whatsoever. I found the speech therapy he received to be excellent and well worth it. (58)

Sure Start helped me to enrol for college and I would like to say a big thank you to all the staff for their help and support in getting me where I am today. (60)

I think that Sure Start is a really good organisation, something that mothers need. It is reassuring to know that there is someone there, regardless of the help/problems we may need help on. (62)

I found chatterbox very helpful for both my child and myself. My son was a very slow talker but chatterbox help improve quickly. (64)

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I have found the services (**Early learning - speech and language**) I have used to be excellent and I am more than satisfied. (68)

I think it's been a great help throughout my son's 3 and a half years. I'd only wished I'd tried more of the groups on offer. (120)

Sure Start is excellent for both children and parents. The events and groups organised for the children have been excellent in encouraging child development. Keep up the good work! (137)

I have recently started driving theory course and I am enjoying it. I think the fundays on a Sunday is a good idea as people don't really have anything to do on a Sunday. (146)

A very good service! (5)

The Sure Start team are stars and I don't know how I would cope without all the help. I just wish everyone could have the opportunities to use Sure Start, my sister lives outside the Sure Start area and has no help. (6)

Fantastic support services. I sing your praises at all opportunities. Just wish it covered the whole area so my friends could visit with their children. (7)

All staff are very helpful and friendly, both my children have thoroughly enjoyed every visit to Sure Start. (14)

Health visitors provide an invaluable service. After difficult birth of my twin boys, the health visitor came out on a weekly basis to provide a listening service and to weigh the boys as I couldn't have physically managed to get to a clinic. She then found me a place and referred me to a post natal depression support group. All of Sure Start is an invaluable resource unit. I still use frequently (boys now 20 months). I think it is a shame that it isn't available to all parents. (16)

I would also like to say what a saint my health visitor is. She is great, helped me so much and I always feel at ease with her. I don't know if there's any awards for people like her, but I would recommend her anyone. (26)

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I would just like to say that I think the Sure Start team at Ditton are very helpful and understand I was only 15 yrs old when I had my baby and they gave me all the help and support I needed during and after my pregnancy. (28)

Everyone is lovely. And very helpful. You never feel as if you are not welcome. They help you as best they can. Sure Start members are a god send I'd be stuck at home everyday, instead I learn something new every time I go and meet some lovely people. Thank you. (31)

I think Sure Start is a very good idea and I wish I had used it earlier. (36)

I think Sure Start is very helpful. (39)

I consider Sure Start to be very helpful and considerate to others. I would like to thank them for all their help when I had the fire. Thanks. (47)

I like it because I know if I ever have any problems I only need to pick up the phone to speak to someone who can give me advice. The kids like all the activities. (51)

It should be available for everyone. A wonderful service. (53)

Thank you - keep up the good work and support. (60)

It's a great thing knowing that when my child comes there is all this great help and advice and also support for me and the baby whenever we need it. It's a good opportunity for me to meet people in my position for a chat and a cuppa! (61)

Sure Start is an excellent service provider. I am a foster carer and have had children of different ages in my care. The Sure Start team have always been very welcoming and helpful. I am a member of the Sure Start management group, parents committee, and capital strategy core group. (68)

A great service for the community. (87)

Sure Start is a brilliant idea. If I had been aware of it earlier I would have took my son before he went to nursery. I only found out about it in September '02. May you carry on your good work for many years to come. (95)

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I have had a lot of support from my health visitors - which I have found invaluable. (97)

It is a fantastic help and the staff are excellent, thank you for your help. (111)

Excellent organisation helpful, friendly staff, good support when needed. (120)

The staff at Sure Start are lovely and the facilities for the kids are wonderful. Ideas for the groups on offer have been excellent. Congratulations on opening a successful centre for families with children and encouraging child development. (137)

I think the Sure Start Service is excellent and all the girls at Ditton are very helpful and friendly. My son really loves all the sessions he attends (147)

Sure Start is very good. I think it helps children a great deal. (130)

I am very pleased with the staff at Sure Start. I have got my son's Eczema sorted out with the help of the health visitor. Also with the help of a Portage worker my son started nursery. If it wasn't for these members of Sure Start I wouldn't of got anywhere so I would just like to say thank you very much. (131)

All the staff at Widnes Sure Start are friendly and professional. We enjoy the groups and have both learned a lot, as being parents for the first time and my child's behaviour and strengths. (138)

I would like to thank all the staff at Sure Start for their help. And keep up the good work. (145)

### **Organisational issues**

This is a good thing (**Early learning - speech and language**) to have but I am a person who works so I don't really have time anymore. The little time I have I like to spend alone with my child. Thanks anyway. (112)

I'm working mum so most things are on while I am at work. When I was on maternity leave I took my youngest son to a group and found it useful to meet other people and talk 'babytalk'. The children were different ages but that is useful as children watch and learn from each other. Thanks. I am off work on Mondays so would be interested in activities. (52)

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I never rang for advice as the lady I was with left for a new job, I then had a nursery nurse come to see me until someone else took over, but this lady tended to always look down at me as if I didn't know what I was doing, she would never answer my questions properly and she was always in a rush. However, I am not going to let one person put me off as my nursery nurse was great and the lady before was, so I am sure that everyone else will be. (63)

I am sorry to be leaving Sure Start in May and I just wish it would open to all ages. I am very pleased with all Sure Start have done and how I have been encouraged to do things for myself. Thank you all. (132)

Hope it continues but better promotion is needed as lots of friends or colleagues don't know of it. (66)

I love the staff, they are very friendly but I feel unless you go there every week you'd miss out on a lot of facilities because you don't get to hear about them in great detail. (128)

My eldest son is on the waiting list for speech and language and has already been assessed. He is 5 years old but I would be very interested to know if there were any extra help I could get for him. (96)

I would very much like to take part in more of the Sure Start activities but find it difficult as working full time. Could you please send me more information about the early learning activities. Thank you. (91)

My baby is still a bit too young to attend the family reading group and fun day. My husband works during the day so the swim class is not a convenient time, but there are plans to start a mum and kids swim soon - so I will attend that. Not used any garden equipment yet - but soon will as we have recently moved to the area and need to sort out the garden. (65)

Arranged skip hire but it never turned up. I went to 1 fun day and the attitude of the organisers was disgusting because of the speaking down to me like I am stupid. I won't be going to another one. (109)

Baby too young yet for most of classes, would like to join more. (144)

I've never used Sure Start because I have a full-time job. If I didn't work then I would probably use the services. (72)

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I tried to hire garden equipment again, but was told that equipment had not been returned by someone else, but that I would be put on a list. I was never contacted.

I haven't been able to get to any of the activities that go on as yet due to other circumstances to do with my baby. (71)

Only registered with Sure Start. (107)

Dads and kids swimming would of liked to take my little boy swimming as I'm a mum and a dad! (128)

First Aid boxes. Could do with be allowed at least 3 because one is not enough. 1 at home, 1 in car, 1 at grandparent's house. (145)

I haven't because of my baby's age and condition. (71)

Waiting to go on course for behaviour support. (130)

On the waiting list for behaviour support to start at Easter. (131)

The feel good group is made up of one hour of exercise and one hour of cookery. We have suggested doing one hour of preparing 'weaning' food for our babies as it is quite time consuming trying to make time at home every week, and it would definitely make me feel good having baby's meals ready. (65)

Never needed to use any as I am at university. (84)

I have used the pampering group once, however I am very disappointed that mums with children over 12 months cannot attend. To me this seems ridiculous as I believe mums with children over 12 months need it more as their children become more active and start on the temper tantrums, etc. Therefore with the extra stress and tiredness of looking after a toddler, I believe that there should DEFINITELY be a pampering group for mums whose children are over 12 months old, just to give them that much needed break. (103)

Waiting to go on Webster Stratton group. (130)

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Sure Start could do with changing the age to 0 - school age. Some children don't start school until five (6)

Would have liked to use more of the groups but it is all planned out for non-working people. I go to St. Helens! There is nothing for working mums who would make a great effort to attend at weekends or on days off. (34)

I have never been because I am waiting for the Sure Start in Upton to start in March! (61)

Because I'm at university my daughter is in a nursery. (84)

My son has just been accepted on a 6 week session of creepy crawlies. (107)

We are to start Top Tots after half term. (148)

As already said. Maybe parents should be asked what would you like to attend, and how can we make it easier for working parents to enjoy facilities at Sure Start. The garden equipment hire was very useful. The safety gates - didn't fit! (34)

I have only just started using Sure Start so have therefore only used it once. (36)

Since joining this is the only correspondence I have received. (42)

Would not need these services (**Early learning - speech and language**) right now, they are both talking fine. (63)

Never have used any of the services(**Early learning - speech and language**). (73)

Have never used Sure Start. (77)

The reason I have not used all the groups is that I work and all the groups are done in the mornings or afternoon, none are at night. (85)

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I work 40+ hours per week Mon-Fri 9-6pm. The sessions I would have liked to participate in were always during the working week. I am well educated, so don't need adult learning. I employ private child minder during out of school hours. (113)

I do think all areas need this sort of service, but I think more communication on an individual level would be better. It would be better to be given a contact name (just one) who could help with your enquiries, source information for you, and co-ordinate/ find out about any classes you want to participate in. (34)

Because of the patronising and condescending manner the services were presented to me in the first instance, with the assumption that because my address fell within a Sure Start area, I must automatically be deprived, I was predisposed to avoid any participation in any of the services offered. I can see whom the services are aimed at but remain unconvinced that I require the assistance of 'the Sure Start team' in achieving the right start in life for my children. Nor do I seek the camaraderie of those target parents who may choose to benefit from the services. I have no desire to win £100 worth of Asda vouchers as I avoid the place like the plague. (73)

If more information could be provided It would be very helpful. Or is this scheme for parents not/unable to work only? (81)

If I did not work, I would use the services more. My daughter attends a childminder. It would be great if there were things going on on a Saturday or Sunday. I travel every Saturday to St. Helen's to a play group/musical class. (83)

Being a working parent it can be difficult to access and remember all the beneficial services that are operated by the Sure Start scheme. I just wish I was able to use them more often. (94)

Get a pampering group for children over 12 months. (103)

There are a large group of single 'working' parents locally, who do not receive benefits etc... We need support with weekend events, sports activities, family fun etc... We also struggle at times with support... but are forgotten and overlooked. (113)

Use Upton Centre more or Chapel Fields. Have more crafty classes. (136)

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**More information about services**

I would like to have a list of times and places of all the activities. All staff are extremely helpful and kind. Thank you for everything. (70)

I was surprised at the amount that Sure Start do. The service I used was very useful but Sure Start does not cater for working parents as a lot of the children's activities are during the day. (64)

I would use the services when I need to and also when I get the time. I didn't realise there was so many services. Could you please send details of times when things are on. Thanks. (116)

I would like to know more and when. **(Activities and help for the family)** (63)

Was not aware all of the above **(Activities and help for families)** were available - thought the service was only for toddler groups. (81)

I never knew about the services **(Activities and help for the family)** that were on offer. (101)

I would like to know more about nutrition, ARCH and pre-school support. (63)

Same as before! **(Support for families)** (81) (*.....Was not aware all of the above were available - thought the service was only for toddler groups.*)

What is ARCH? What is CAB? (103)

What is pre-school support? (128)

I would like to know more about someone to talk to please. Thank you. (43)

Would like to know more about the feel good group. (63)

Not aware any available. **(For parents)** (66)

What is feel good group? (128)

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Would like to know more about the pampering group and B4 4 crèche, also, mums quit smoking. (63)

Not aware any available. **(Childhood and parenting)** (66)

Would like to know more about all of the above. **(Early learning)** (63)

Would be very interested to know dates and times for these groups **(Early learning)**. (91)

What is learn through play? (128)

I wasn't aware of all the services that Sure Start provides. I will certainly look into some of these in the future. (18)

Never knew they did so much or where or when and how you get information on these services or I would use quite a lot of these services as they sound very good. I have put rings around services I would like to use but don't know how. (56)

I have never received information on this scheme and the activities it provides. Would and could be very useful. (81)

Please send me information about all services **(Early learning - speech and language)** offered. (101)

I didn't know about all these services. **(Early learning - speech and language)** Perhaps we should have more information about the services that are provided. (126)

A lot of the stuff I have ticked never for I didn't know about. What's chatterbox? The things I've put what is? I'm interested but don't know exactly what they are. (128)

I would like to know more about the driving lessons because I am interested. (9)

I was not aware of the amount of services provided. I would like more information on these. (11)

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I didn't really know these things were going on there. (45)

Could send us more information about the services I have commented about. (69)

Could you send more info about the Sure Start. (110)

**Future action in relation to Sure Start**

My baby is too young for most of these courses (Early learning), but when he is old enough I'm sure he and I will enjoy them. The toy library is very useful to 'test out' toys on my son to see if he likes them or not. This was especially helpful when friends and family asked me what to get him for xmas. (65)

Child Safety Equipment and Dad and Kids Swimming : "never used but will soon." Will use these as my child gets a little older.

My fella would like to go to the dads 'n kids swimming. (69)

Will be using dads swimming. Will be using mums swimming. (144)

Would like to be involved in the nutrition class. (135)

I will be trying the sleep clinic in the near future. (109)

Need to make appointment for pre-school for my child and 40 month. (40)

I will be trying the baby massage in the near future. (109)

Will hopefully use a lot of these as baby gets a little older. (57)

I would like to go to learn through play, toy library, early learning group and creepy crawlies. (69)

I hope to get more involved. It seems an excellent support group. (107)

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