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**Blacon Sure Start
Parent Satisfaction Survey**

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Executive Summary

The 2003 Blacon Sure Start Parent Survey was conducted by the Sure Start Evaluation Team in the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR) at University College Chester and by Blacon Sure Start. It was commissioned and funded by Blacon Sure Start. The research involved approaching a sample of families who are eligible to use Sure Start services to fill in a questionnaire. The sample included families who are not registered with Sure Start and who may not be using Sure Start services. Families were approached by post and in person. A total of 370 questionnaires were sent out and 81 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Key findings

Awareness of Sure Start

- Four out of five families are aware of Blacon Sure Start. A key challenge is to increase awareness to be universal.
- About 50% of families would like more information about the range of services offered by Sure Start and other local organisations.

Use of Local Services

- The health visiting and midwifery services are those most commonly accessed by Sure Start families.
- The library is also a commonly used local resource, despite a relatively low level of library membership among children living in the Sure Start area.
- Just over a third of families have received the Sure Start Book Start Pack and about a quarter of families have received the Sure Start Safety Pack. Smaller families had a lower uptake of both packs. Uptake of Safety Packs was lower among families where no-one in the house was in employment for more than 16 hours a week.
- Individual Sure Start groups were only attended by small numbers of respondents. In some cases, this is because the group is aimed at a very specific group of families. The most well attended service is the Drop-In Centre.
- Parent and toddler groups are accessed by just over four out of ten families. As all families are eligible to attend these groups, there is potential for improvement here.
- Four out of ten families attended a playgroup or nursery, which is a high rate of usage given that only older children are usually eligible for these services.

Satisfaction with Services

- Almost all families reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with local services for families with young children.

-
- Approximately seven out of ten families said they thought that services for families had improved in the last year.
 - Satisfaction was high with both one-to-one services - such as health visiting and midwifery - and with local groups for children and families. This includes Sure Start groups, parent and toddler groups and playgroups and nurseries.
 - A few families expressed dissatisfaction with a small number of individual services.
 - Families suggested additional services they need and ways that services can be developed. A common request was for the timing of services to be revised. Families also wanted more active play groups and quality indoor and outdoor play areas.

Access to Childcare

- Families most often rely on family members and/or a partner or ex-partner for help with childcare, indicating that family support is a valuable local resource.
- A significant minority of individuals have no access to family support; 60% of families reported that they sometimes struggle to find childcare when they really need it.
- Lone parents and families where no-one in the home is in employment for more than 16 hours a week have particular difficulty accessing the childcare they need.
- Families made specific recommendations about the help they would like to receive with childcare.

Recommendations

- The survey includes many practical recommendations made by families about how services can be improved.
- In addition, the CPHR researchers recommend the following steps to enable further progress towards the Sure Start targets and to produce greater engagement with the local community:
 - action be taken to ensure that awareness of Sure Start becomes universal;
 - survey findings are widely reported to Sure Start partners, to share the good news about local satisfaction with services and to encourage the on-going improvement of services;
 - families are consulted about the best media through which they can become better informed about local services;
 - the uptake of Sure Start packs should be monitored, and followed-up, using the Sure Start Database;
 - there be a review of possible barriers to attendance at Sure Start groups and a plan for improving access;

-
- the reasons for a small number of respondents being dissatisfied with some Sure Start groups be investigated with a focus on service development;
 - Sure Start groups and parent and toddler groups develop action plans to boost participation rates;
 - the Sure Start evaluators explore some of the findings in the survey in more depth, using qualitative methods;
 - the 2004 parent survey includes some further questions, to explore issues that were not covered in this year's study.

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 is a statutory requirement. Objectives and targets are set for Sure Start programmes so that progress can be monitored to ascertain whether, and to what extent, a programme has "made a difference".

To fulfil the requirement for monitoring and evaluation, Blacon Sure Start commissioned the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR), University College Chester to undertake research to understand how well the Blacon Sure Start programme is working in terms of the objectives, targets and principles of Sure Start. A required element of this evaluation is to establish, on an annual basis, the percentage of parents with children aged 0-4 reporting that they are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with local services for families with young children.

This survey of families in the area was undertaken by the Blacon Sure Start Programme in September 2003. The analysis and report was produced by the CPHR, as part of its monitoring and evaluation contract with the programme.

The aim of this survey was to establish levels of satisfaction with services amongst parents or carers of children aged 0-4 years in the Blacon Sure Start area during the last year.

The objectives of the survey were to:

- fulfil the national requirements for reporting levels of satisfaction with Sure Start services overall;
- review the use of services for families with young children;
- review levels of satisfaction with individual services;
- review levels of knowledge about Sure Start services;
- obtain comments about services for families with young children;
- inform service development by Sure Start and partnering agencies.

Chapter 2

Study design and methodology

2.1 Study design

This study of users' satisfaction with Sure Start services in Blacon employed 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 sample of parents drawn from across the whole Sure Start area. All respondents were entered into a prize draw as an incentive to participate. The prize draw entry, with the respondent's name and address, was included with the questionnaire as a detachable sheet. The completed questionnaires were anonymous.

2.2 The Sure Start population and how it was sampled

The target population for this survey was parents or carers of children under four who lived within the Sure Start area and who were born between September 1999 and June 2003. A small initial sample of between 15 and 20 registered families was randomly selected from the Blacon Sure Start database. The major sample was drawn from the Child Health Database (held by West Cheshire Primary Care Trust) which is the most comprehensive list of children under four available to Sure Start. This database was used in preference to the Sure Start Database to ensure that the sample included parents and carers who were eligible to use Sure Start services but not registered with Sure Start. A sample of one in four eligible children was selected from the Child Health Database and their parents/carers contacted by post. Families using the Drop-In Centre and other Sure Start groups were also given questionnaires on an *ad hoc* basis. These methods of sampling gave a total sample of 370 parents/carers.

2.3 Design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was based on a template developed by the CPHR in association with the Ellesmere Port Sure Start programme. An additional section was added to ask about the use of, and satisfaction with, services not offered by Sure Start¹. The questions included in the questionnaire related to:

- use of services not offered by Sure Start;
- use of Sure Start services and groups;
- satisfaction with services used;
- access to childcare;
- socio-demographic data in respect of: relationship to child; number and ages of children in the family; whether the parent/carer was a lone parent

¹ These services included 'mainstream' health visitors, midwives and family support workers. It should be noted that, in addition, the Sure Start programme employs its own health visitor, midwives and family support workers and, so, these services were researched in terms of both Sure Start and mainstream provision.

or was living with the child's other parent or a different partner; employment status within the household, and; the ethnicity of the child.

The questionnaire also allowed space for respondents to add their own comments about additional services they would like in the area. A copy of the covering letter, the questionnaire and the detachable prize draw entry can be found in Appendix 1.

2.4 Survey methods

Two methods were used to conduct the survey. Firstly, the sample of parents/carers drawn from the Blacon Sure Start database and the Child Health Database was sent a questionnaire, prize draw slip, covering letter, participant information sheet and a reply-paid envelope. The covering letter asked the parent/carer to return the questionnaire by a particular deadline, using the reply-paid envelope. The participant information sheet explained why the research was being conducted, why the parent/carer had been selected to take part and the procedures in place to ensure the anonymity of responses. Providing this information forms part of CPHR's ethical research practice. A copy of the participant information sheet can be found in Appendix 1.

The second method for distributing questionnaires was to give them out on an *ad hoc* basis to parents/carers using the Drop-In Centre and Sure Start groups. Each questionnaire was given with a prize draw slip, covering letter, participant information sheet and a reply-paid envelope.

2.5 Survey schedule

The timetable for the administration of the questionnaire was as follows:

Mailing of questionnaires	8 September 2003
Closing date for return of completed questionnaires	17 September 2003
Prize Draw	22 September 2003

Winners of the prize draw were notified by telephone.

2.6 Response rate

A total of 81 questionnaires were included in the analysis giving an overall response rate of 22%. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS).

Chapter 3

Results

3.1 Introduction

A total of 370 questionnaires were sent out and 81 responses were received by the closing date, giving a response rate of 22%.

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

Please note that all figures in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3.2 Characteristics of the respondents and their families

Of the 81 respondents, 95% (77 people) were mothers, three percent (two people) were fathers and one percent (one person) was a grandparent. The relationship of the respondent to the child under four was not known for one percent (one person) of the respondents.

Of the 77 mothers:

- 32% (24 people) were lone parents;
- 64% (48 people) were living with the child's father;
- 4% (three people) were living with another partner.

Of the two fathers, one was a lone parent and the other was living with the child's mother.

With regard to employment status within the families, six respondents did not report on employment. Of the remaining 75 respondents, 60% (45 people) reported having at least one person in the family in a paid job for more than 16 hours per week.

3.3 The number and ethnicity of children living with the respondents

The number of children living with the respondents is summarised in Table 3.3. Nineteen people (23% of respondents) reported that there were three or more children under sixteen living with them and four respondents (five percent of respondents - three mothers and one grandparent) reported they had no children living with them. It is not clear why some 'mothers' did not report have any children living with them.

Table 3.3 The number of children under 16 living with the respondents

Number of children under 16	Number	Percent
0	4	5
1	25	31
2	32	40
3	14	17
4	5	6
Total	80	99
No response	1	1
Total	81	100

Of the 80 respondents who reported on the ethnicity of the children in their care, 96% (77 people) said the child or children were white (British). The remaining three were reported as:

- White (other) (one person);
- Mixed (White/Black Caribbean) (one person);
- Mixed (White/Black African) (one person).

3.4 Overall knowledge of, and satisfaction with, Sure Start services

People were asked about their knowledge of Sure Start before receipt of the questionnaire:

- 85% of respondents (69 people) said they had heard of Sure Start;
- 79% (64 people) said they knew there was a Sure Start Programme providing services in Blacon.

Of the 78 respondents who responded to the question as to whether or not they get enough information about services in Blacon, 51% (40 people) said they did not receive enough information about services. One person said that it was "very hit and miss" whether they heard about courses and added:

"How about using text messaging on mobiles?" (Respondent 10)

Comments about information were also made by two of the 38 people who said they *had* received enough information. One said specifically that they would like:

"More information on activities suitable for young toddlers (pre-school)." (Respondent 52)

The second person said that:

"Sometimes it (information) comes too late for me to get involved." (Respondent 79)

Table 3.4 summarises where people heard about Sure Start services. The most common sources of information were:

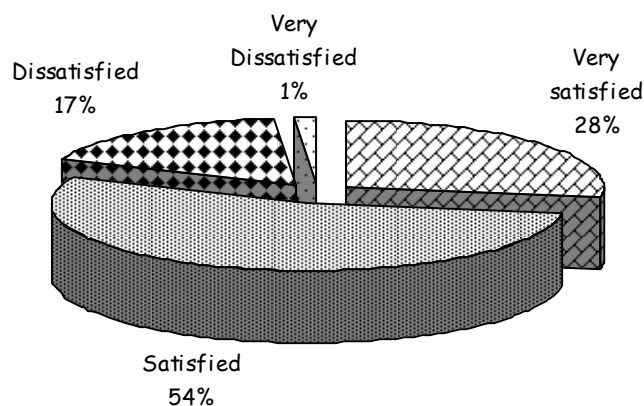
- the midwifery service (cited by 33% of those responding to question);
- a friend or family member (cited by 26% of those responding to question);
- a leaflet/poster (cited by 22% of those responding to question).

Table 3.4 Sources of information about Sure Start

Heard about Sure Start from....	Number	Percent
Midwife	27	33
a friend or family member	21	26
leaflet/poster	18	22
Health Visitor	17	21
Sure Start Worker	15	19
information through post	12	15
advertisement	11	14
pre-school or nursery	6	7
Social Services	1	1
other	3	4

The overall level of satisfaction with services for families with young children in Blacon was high, with 82% of respondents reporting they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with these services. This figure is important as it is the indicator of satisfaction used by the Sure Start Unit. Figure 3.4 below summarises the levels of satisfaction with services for families in Blacon.

Figure 3.4 Overall satisfaction with services for families with young children in Blacon



Of those responding, 69% (52 people) said they thought that services for families with young children had "got better" over the last year. Twenty-three percent (17

people) "didn't know" and seven percent (five people) thought they had "stayed the same". One person (one percent of respondents) thought that services had "got worse" over the last year.

Views were sought about whether or not people felt there were enough services to help families with young children in Blacon. Of the 69 people who responded, 64% (44 people) said they felt there were enough services.

Twenty-five people (31% of respondents) commented when asked about other services they would like to receive that would help in caring for a child under four years old. Some people made more than one suggestion in their comments. All of the comments made are listed in full in Appendix 2.

Seven of the 25 who commented on additional services specifically mentioned childcare services in relation to increased provision, timing and cost of provision. Two people commented on information about services. Sixteen people commented on developments to existing services and/or additional types of service they would like:

- improved outdoor play areas (cited by six people);
- support for parents (cited by five people), e.g. befriending schemes, stress busting, accessible buses to make travelling with children easier, and timing of services;
- more physical play activities (cited by four people), e.g. tumbletots, baby gymnastics, indoor soft play area, dance;
- parent skills, e.g. first aid, baby massage (cited by two people);
- early learning support for children (cited by two people), e.g. with reading, writing, numbers;
- activities for specific age groups (cited by two people), e.g. five to 10 year olds and under sevens;
- other services (cited by two people), e.g. physiotherapy, healthy eating talk.

3.5 Use of, and satisfaction with, mainstream services not directly funded by Sure Start

Table 3.5 summarises the number and percentage of respondents who, in the last year, had used mainstream services not directly funded by Sure Start. The health visiting service was used by the highest proportion of respondents. Nearly half of all respondents had used the library.

It should be noted that the total number of people using some services is small. Although percentages have been calculated throughout for the purpose of consistency, percentage figures should be treated with caution when the numbers they relate to are under ten.

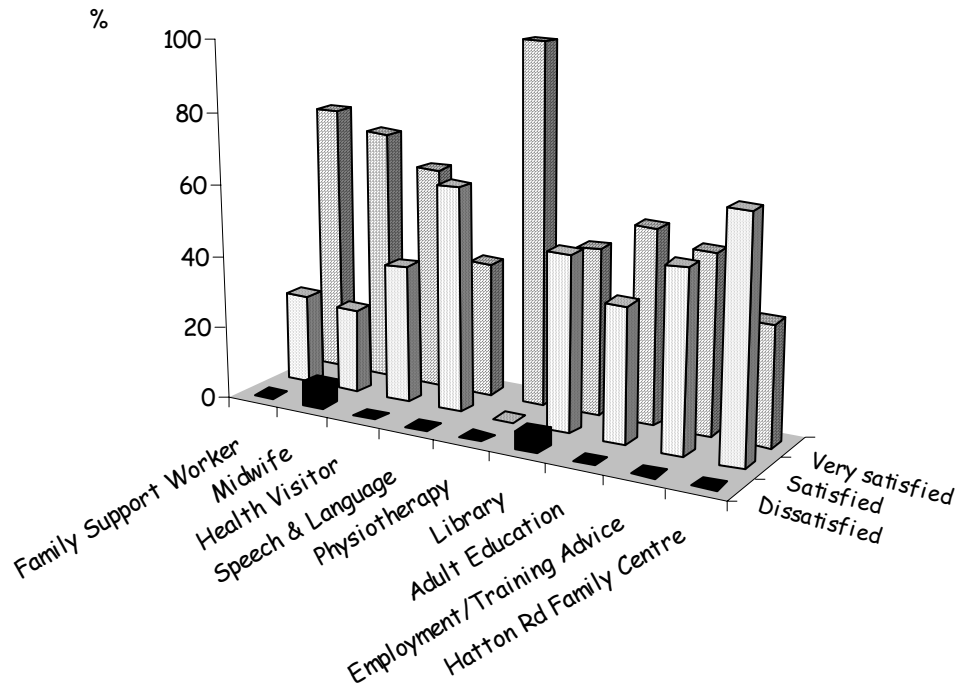
Table 3.5 The number and percentage of respondents who, in the last year, had used mainstream services not directly funded by Sure Start

Service (not offered by Sure Start) used...	Number	Percent
Health Visitor	55	68
Library	39	48
Midwife	30	37
Adult Education	24	30
Speech & Language	8	10
Family Support Worker	4	5
Employment/Training Advice	4	5
Hatton Road Family Centre	3	4
Physiotherapist	1	1

Figure 3.5 illustrates the levels of satisfaction amongst those who, in the last year, had used mainstream services not directly funded by Sure Start. Table 1 in Appendix 3 summarises the responses received.

The levels of satisfaction with mainstream services were generally high, with all services having over 90% of those reporting on their level of satisfaction being either "very satisfied" or "satisfied". For all but three services (Hatton Road Family Centre, Speech & Language and the Library) the proportion of those reporting being "very satisfied" was equal to or greater than the proportion of those reporting being "satisfied". The levels of dissatisfaction were low, with only the midwifery service and the library service having any respondents reporting dissatisfaction. No-one reported being "very dissatisfied" with a service.

Figure 3.5 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who, in the last year, had used mainstream services not directly funded by Sure Start



(Please note that not all the respondents who used a service reported on their level of satisfaction.)

3.6 Use of, and satisfaction with, Sure Start services

The levels of use of Sure Start services was generally lower than for services not offered by Sure Start. The services used by the highest proportion of respondents were:

- midwifery, used by 27% of respondents;
- health visiting, used by 20% of respondents.

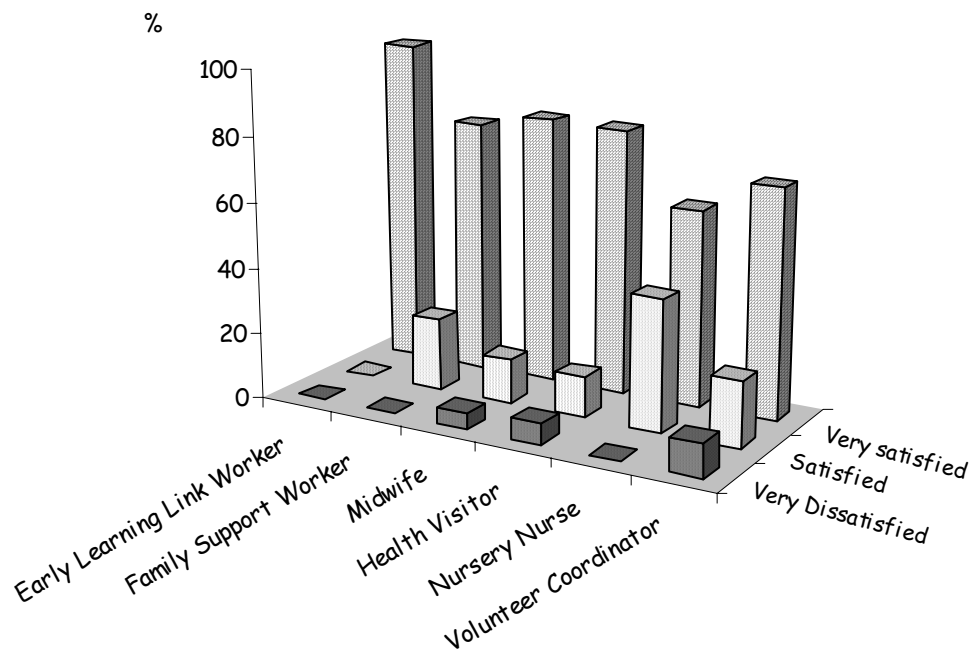
Table 3.6 summarises the number and percentage of respondents who had used Sure Start services in the last year.

Table 3.6 The number and percentage of respondents using a Sure Start service in the last year

Sure Start service	Number	Percent
Midwife	22	27
Health Visitor	16	20
Volunteer Coordinator	10	12
Family Support Worker	9	11
Early Learning Link Worker	8	10
Nursery Nurse	5	6

Figure 3.6 illustrates the levels of satisfaction amongst those who used a Sure Start service in the last year. Table 2 in Appendix 3 summarises the responses received. Overall, the levels of satisfaction amongst those who had used a Sure Start service were high, with all services having at least 60% of users reporting they had been "very satisfied". One person reported they had been "very dissatisfied" with the midwifery, health visiting and volunteer coordinator services.

Figure 3.6 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who used a Sure Start service in the last year



3.7 Sure Start packs

Thirty-five percent of the respondents (28 people) reported they had received the Sure Start Book Start Pack and of these:

- 71% (20 people) said it was "very helpful";
- 25% (seven people) said it was "helpful";
- 4% (one person) said it was "not very helpful".

Thirty-two percent of mothers (25 people), both fathers and a grandparent received the Sure Start Book Start Pack. Forty-four percent of lone parents (11 people) received the pack compared with about one in three of those living with a partner. Twenty-nine percent of families (13 respondents) with someone within the home in employment for more than 16 hours a week received the Book Start Pack, compared with 48% (15 respondents) where no-one within the home was in employment for more than 16 hours a week.

With respect to family size, higher proportions of those with larger families reported receiving the Book Start Pack:

- 40% of those with four children (two people) received the Book Start Pack;
- 64% of those with three children (nine people) received the Book Start Pack;
- 25% of those with two children (eight people) received the Book Start Pack;
- 32% of those with one child (eight people) received the Book Start Pack;
- one person with no children received the Book Start Pack.

Twenty-six percent of the respondents (21 people) reported they had received the Sure Start Safety Pack and of these:

- 76% (16 people) said it was "very helpful";
- 24% (five people) said it was "helpful".

Twenty-six percent of mothers (20 people) and one of the two fathers received the Sure Start Safety Pack. Twenty-four percent of lone parents (six people) received the pack compared with about one in three of those living with a partner. Twenty-nine percent of families (13 respondents) with someone within the home in employment for more than 16 hours a week received the Safety Pack, compared with 19% (six respondents) where no-one within the home was in employment for more than 16 hours a week.

With respect to family size, none of the families with no children had received a Safety pack and amongst the other families:

- 20% of those with four children (one person) received the Safety Pack;
- 50% of those with three children (seven people) received the Safety Pack;
- 13% of those with two children (four people) received the Safety Pack;
- 36% of those with one child (nine people) received the Safety Pack.

3.8 Attendance at, and satisfaction with, Sure Start groups

The questionnaire asked respondents to report on which Sure Start groups they had attended in the last year. These responses are given in Table 3.8. The services used by the highest proportion of respondents were:

- Sure Start Drop-In (used by 32% of respondents);
- Craft Courses (used by 27% of respondents);
- Sure Start Summer Activities (used by 26% of respondents);
- Sure Start Fun and Craft Activities (used by 23% of respondents).

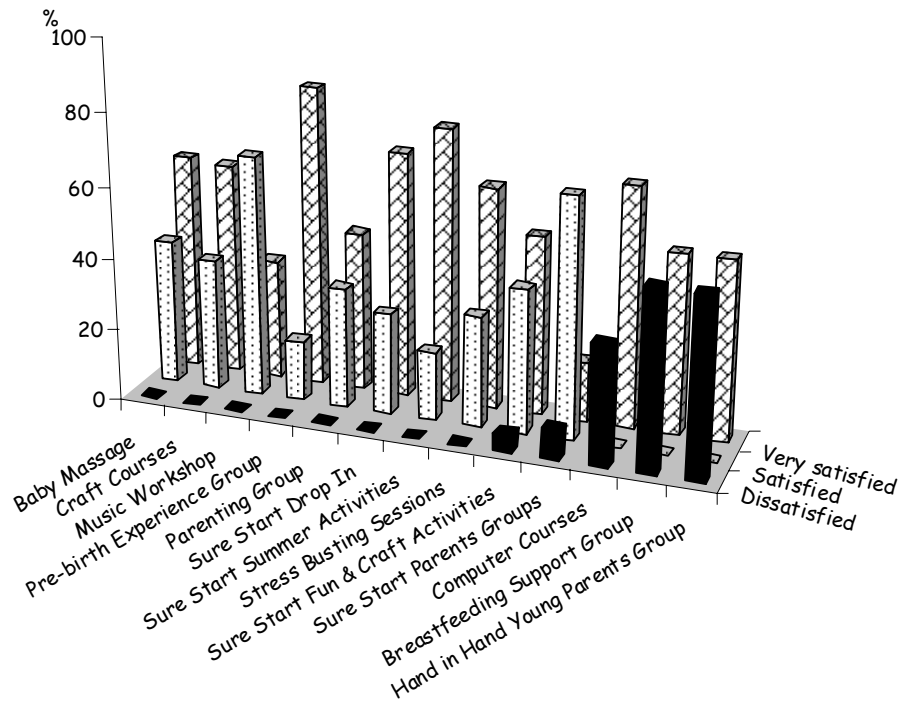
Only two people reported attending the Breastfeeding Support Group and the Hand in Hand Young Parents Group. These groups have a restricted target audience, so lower levels of use may be expected.

Table 3.8 The number and percentage of respondents using Sure Start groups in the last year.

Sure Start service attended...	Number	Percent
Sure Start Drop In	26	32
Craft Courses	22	27
Sure Start Summer Activities	21	26
Sure Start Fun & Craft Activities	19	23
Sure Start Parents Groups	13	16
Stress Busting Sessions	12	15
Music Workshop	9	11
Parenting Group	9	11
Pre-birth Experience Group	6	7
Baby Massage	5	6
Computer Courses	3	4
Breastfeeding Support Group	2	2
Hand in Hand Young Parents Group	2	2

Figure 3.8 illustrates the levels of satisfaction amongst those who had attended a Sure Start group in the last year. Table 3 in Appendix 3 summarises the responses received. Overall, the levels of satisfaction with Sure Start groups were high. Ten of the 13 groups had 50% or more of users reporting that they had been "very satisfied". However, five groups (the Breastfeeding Support Group, the Hand in Hand Young Parents Group, the Computer Courses, the Sure Start Parents Group and the Sure Start Fun and Craft Activities) each had one person who reported they had been "dissatisfied". No respondent reported being "very dissatisfied" with any group.

Figure 3.8 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who attended Sure Start groups.



3.9 Use of, and satisfaction with, parent and toddler groups

Just over four out of every ten respondents (33 people) reported they had attended at least one parent and toddler group in the last year. Of these, 27 (82% of respondents) attended just one group and six (18% of respondents) attended two groups. This gave a total of 39 'attendances' at parent and toddler groups over the year. The groups with the highest number of people reporting attendance were Jigsaw (six people), Hoolitots (five people) and Matthew Henry Church (five people). A full list of the groups attended is given in Appendix 4.

Attendance at a parent and toddler group was reported as having been either "satisfactory" or "very satisfactory" in 85% (33) of cases. There were four people who reported they were "dissatisfied" with a group they had attended and two people reported they were "very dissatisfied". The groups with which some dissatisfaction was expressed were Matthew Henry Church Group, St. Matthew's Church Group, Jigsaw, Northgate Arena Group, United Reformed Church and Riley Hall. One person who had attended two groups reported being "dissatisfied" with both.

3.10 Use of, and satisfaction with, playgroups and nurseries

Four out of every ten respondents (32 people) reported they had attended a playgroup or nursery in the last year. The group with the highest number of attendances was Stepping Stones (six people). A full list of the groups attended is given in Appendix 5.

Thirty-one people reported being either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the playgroups or nurseries they attended, although eight of these did not record the name of the group they attended. One person reported they were "dissatisfied" with the group they had attended. The group was Kids Unlimited.

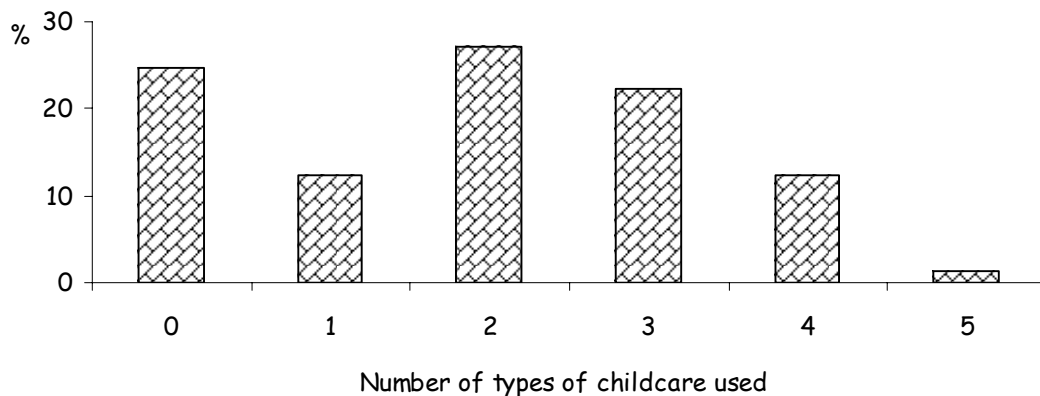
3.11 Childcare

The survey asked respondents to report on their use of childcare over the last year. Of the 81 respondents:

- 25% (20 people) had not used any;
- 12% (10 people) had used only one form;
- 49% (40 people) had used two or three forms;
- 13% (11 people) had used four or five forms.

Figure 3.11 illustrates the distribution of the number of forms of childcare used by all respondents.

Figure 3.11 Distribution of the number of forms of childcare used



Analysis of the forms of childcare used showed that amongst all respondents:

- 54% (44 people) had used another family member;
- 47% (38 people) had used a partner or ex-partner;
- 28% (21 people) had used a crèche;
- 23% (19 people) had used a friend;
- 15% (12 people) had used a paid babysitter;
- 10% (eight people) had used a childminder;
- 7% (six people) had used a fee-charging day nursery;

-
- 1% (one person) had used Hatton Road Family Centre;
 - 5% (four people) had used other forms of childcare.

Respondents were asked if they ever struggled to access childcare when they really needed it. Sixty percent (45 people) of those who responded to this question said they *had* struggled to find childcare. Six people did not indicate whether or not they had struggled.

In homes where there was at least one person with a paid job for more than 16 hours a week, 51% of respondents (22 people) struggled to get help with childcare. This compared with 76% (21 people) of families where there was no-one in the home with a paid job for more than 16 hours a week.

Amongst 'lone parent' families, 75% of respondents (18 people) struggled to get help with childcare, compared to 53% of respondents (25 people) who were living with the child's other parent and 33% of respondents (one person) who were living with another partner.

Chapter 4

Conclusions and recommendations

The 2003 Parent Satisfaction Survey provides an indication of the use of, and satisfaction with, services in Blacon. Using the Child Health Database for the sample ensured that families not registered with Sure Start (and who may not be accessing Sure Start services) were included in the survey.

The survey indicates that the awareness of Sure Start is relatively high in Blacon, with 85% of respondents saying they had heard of Sure Start and 79% saying they knew there was a local programme in Blacon. This awareness had been raised by Sure Start partners, particularly midwives and health visitors, as well as by word of mouth, leaflets/posters and Sure Start workers. As one in five families was unaware of Blacon Sure Start, spreading awareness remains a key challenge for the partnership. Although most parents/carers were generally aware of Sure Start, 51% said they did not receive enough information about services available in Blacon. Some respondents commented about the lack of information, others on its timing (it had been too late to access services). Some parents/carers also asked for types of services that are already available. Again, this reflects their lack of knowledge about services. The lack of knowledge about services has arisen despite the effort being made by the Sure Start programme and partners to promote services. We recommend that a consultation exercise is undertaken with parents/carers to consider appropriate media through which they could become better informed about services.

Findings about the overall satisfaction with services for families with young children in Blacon were encouraging, with eight out of ten families saying they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied". Increasing this to nearer 100% will remain a key challenge for the programme. We recommend that this result is reported to Sure Start staff and partners, as encouragement to on-going service development. Sixty-nine percent of respondents said that services had "got better" over the last year indicating investment in local services for families has produced discernible improvements for many. The Partnership could fruitfully work towards an increase in this figure next year.

Results relating to the use of 'mainstream' services not offered by Sure Start indicate that health visiting and midwifery are the primary services accessed by young families in Blacon and they are the main vehicles through which families find out about Sure Start services. Satisfaction with all mainstream services was high and there was no major level of dissatisfaction with any service. The library was another reasonably well used service (nearly half of all families reported using it). This compares to a library membership rate among children under four in 2002-3 of just 8%. We recommend that local qualitative research be undertaken to establish the kind of uses made of the library and how this may be extended.

Services such as health visiting, midwifery and family support workers are offered by Sure Start and also by other agencies. The survey indicates the number of respondents using a service offered by Sure Start was lower than the number using the corresponding 'non-Sure Start' service. There could be a variety of reasons for this difference, such as:

- actual difference in levels of provision of services;
- when contacting a family, workers may not always identify the agency for which they are working, so respondents may not be aware of a difference in service provision.

Satisfaction with Sure Start provision was high with all services having at least 90% of users being "very satisfied" or "satisfied".

Just over a third of respondents had received the Sure Start Book Start Pack, about a quarter of respondents had received the Sure Start Safety Pack and the overwhelming majority of recipients found them either "very helpful" or "helpful". We recommend that the Sure Start Programme ensures that all families are aware of their eligibility for these packs. Tracking of the distribution of the packs can now be conducted using the Sure Start Database. Follow-up of distribution, and reasons for not accessing the packs, may be fruitful, especially among those with smaller families (who have a lower rate of uptake of both packs) and families where no-one in the house is in employment for more than 16 hours per week (who have a lower uptake of the Safety Pack, but a higher uptake of the Book Start Pack, compared to families where there is someone in employment for more than 16 hours per week).

There was a wide range of levels of use of the Sure Start groups offered in Blacon. The group with the highest usage was the Drop-In Centre, followed by the craft and fun based groups. The groups with the lowest proportion of respondents using the service were the Breastfeeding Support Group and the Hand in Hand Young Parents Group. Both of these are specialist groups whose attendance is likely to be limited. Generally, the more 'formal' groups had lower usage. These findings may suggest that families prefer a more 'relaxed' approach to accessing services.

Several comments made on questionnaires indicated that there were some barriers to using services with respect to the timing of groups (to enable those in employment to access services) and lack of confidence in engaging with groups. We recommend that the programme reviews barriers to attendance at Sure Start groups and establishes a plan to promote engagement. The level of satisfaction with the groups was high, with 10 of the 13 services having over 50% or more of users reporting that they had been "very satisfied". Some dissatisfaction was expressed about the Computer Course, the Breastfeeding Support Group and the Hand in Hand Young Parents Group. We recommend that qualitative research is

undertaken to ascertain the source of this dissatisfaction and routes for service development. In particular, this research should identify whether dissatisfaction relates to greater quantity of the service or to the nature of the service.

Just over four out of ten respondents reported having accessed a parent and toddler group in the last year and 85% of attendances were reported to have been "satisfactory" or "very satisfactory". As all families with a child under four are eligible to use these groups there is potential for promoting uptake of parent and toddler groups. In particular, it may be worth:

- promoting the idea that many of these groups are open to families with babies and not just 'toddlers';
- ensuring that the timing of groups meets the needs of users.

Four out of ten respondents reported attending a playgroup or nursery in the last year. There was a high level of satisfaction with these services.

The survey asked about the childcare available to, and used by, families. A quarter of respondents had not used any childcare over the last year. About one in ten users had relied on one form and half had used two or three forms of childcare. Individuals were most likely to report using a family member, partner or ex-partner. This indicates that family support is a valuable local resource, but it may also mean that families without access to help from relatives are vulnerable. The survey also indicates that access to family support does not protect families from struggling to find childcare when they really need it. Indeed, six out of ten respondents reported that they sometimes struggled to access childcare. This problem was more acute among lone parents and those families where no-one in the home was in employment for more than 16 hours a week, probably because they have less family support and are less able to pay for childcare. Recommendations for service development in relation to childcare made by respondents include:

- help to make parents using childcare provided by a family member eligible for state-funded financial remuneration for childcare (this would require helping the family member to become a registered childminder);
- a vetting process and agency for 'babysitters';
- increased availability of flexible and affordable childcare for parents who want to pursue education or have time away from their child(ren).

We recommend that further qualitative research is undertaken into local childcare needs and innovative methods for meeting those needs. Such work would be timely given the imminent expansion of childcare services through children's centres.

Six out of ten people thought there were sufficient services available to help families with a young child in Blacon. However, multiple suggestions for additional services, as well as improvements to existing services, were made. We recommend that Sure Start examines the list of services requested in the light of its current

provision and considers making appropriate developments. This may require further qualitative research into the needs cited.

Our final conclusion relates to improvements that could be made to the Parent Satisfaction Survey when it is conducted in 2004. We recommend that greater efforts are made to improve the response rate in order to increase the number of respondents. This would enable the analysis of satisfaction among sub-samples (for example, satisfaction in different wards). It would also be fruitful for future surveys to target fathers and other carers, including those who are not resident with the child. Finally, information about the following would enhance the conclusions that can be drawn from the parent survey:

- age of children in the family;
- age of the parents (to identify teenage parents);
- the primary carer of the child(ren);
- postcode where the child(ren) live;
- whether the mother is in employment, education or training;
- whether the family needs 'out of hours' services;
- what services have been accessed in the home;
- the year in which services were used;
- how advice has been used within the family;
- how the family would you like to get information about services;
- awareness of how Sure Start is governed;
- involvement or interest in participating in the governance of Sure Start;
- overall impressions of Sure Start.

We also recommend that respondents are asked to indicate whether they would be prepared to take part in an interview or focus group to explore issues raised in the parent survey in more depth. This would involve giving contact details, but CPHR would ensure that their responses remained anonymous.

Appendix 1

**The covering letter, the questionnaire, the detachable prize
draw entry and the participant information sheet**

8th September 2003

Dear Parent

SureStart Parental Survey 2003

As you may know Sure Start is the Government's programme aimed at making life better for children, parents and communities by bringing together Early education, childcare, health and family support.

Each year SureStart programmes are required to carry out a survey to find out what parents think about local services. It is also important that we know how to make services better. **We are asking you to help us with this task.**

Please complete the questionnaire and return it to us in the pre-paid stamped addressed envelope (or give it to a SureStart worker if you are seeing one) **by 17th September.**

If you've not managed to return it by 17th September one of our workers will phone or visit you to ask the same questions.

When we receive your completed questionnaire you will be entered in a prize draw. We will be offering **prizes of £50 and £25** of Argos vouchers for the first two postal replies drawn from the hat.

So that we know who has replied to us please could you **write your child's name and address on the tear off slip.** This will be separated from the questionnaire and placed in the prize draw.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you want further information about this survey, or if you do not want to take part.

Many Thanks

MARCUS ROBINSON
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER/DEPUTY



SureStart Parent Survey 2003

Please remember that these questions are about your experience of being the parent or carer to the child who is named in our letter to you.

Q1. Have you used any of these services in the last year?

(Please note, these are services NOT offered by Sure Start)

	<i>Please tick all services you have used</i>
Midwife	
Health visitor	
Speech & Language (for a child under 4)	
Physiotherapy (for a child under 4)	
Library (for a child under 4)	
Adult education or other college or short course	
Employment or training advice	
Hatton Road Family Centre	

Q2. How satisfied were you with the services you used?

(Please only comment on the services you have used in the last year)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Family Support Worker				
Midwife				
Health visitor				
Speech & Language (for a child under 4)				
Physiotherapy (for a child under 4)				
Library (for a child under 4)				
Adult education or other college or short course				
Employment or training advice				
Hatton Road Family Centre				

Q3. Have you used any of these Sure Start services in the last year?

	<i>Please tick all services you have used</i>
Sure Start Early Learning Link Worker-	
Sure Start Family Support Worker	
Sure Start Midwife	
Sure Start Health visitor	
Sure Start Nursery Nurse	
Sure Start Volunteer Co-ordinator	

Q4. How satisfied were you with the Sure Start services you used?

(Please only comment on the services you have used in the last year)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Sure Start Early Learning Link Worker				
Sure Start Family Support Worker				
Sure Start Midwife				
Sure Start Health visitor				
Sure Start Nursery Nurse				
Sure Start Volunteer Co-ordinator				

Q5. Have you received any of these packs in the last year?

	<u>Please tick all the packs you have received</u>
Sure Start Book Start Pack	
Sure Start Safety Pack	

- **If no**, got to Q 7.
- **If yes**, please answer Q6 before going to Q7.

Q6. How helpful were the packs you received?

	Very helpful	Helpful	Not very helpful	Not at all helpful
Sure Start Book Start Pack				
Sure Start Safety Pack				

Q7. Have you attended any of these Sure Start groups in the last year?

	<u>Please tick all of the groups you have attended</u>
Baby Massage	
Breastfeeding Support Group	
Computer Courses	
Craft Courses	
Hand in Hand Young Parents Group	
Music Workshops	
Pre-Birth Experience Group	

Parenting Group	
Sure Start Drop In	
Sure Start Fun & Craft Activities	
Sure Start Parents Group	
Sure Start Summer Activities	
Stress Busting sessions	

Q8. How satisfied were you with the Sure Start groups you attended?

(Please only comment on the groups you have attended in the last year)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Baby Massage				
Breastfeeding Support Group				
Computer Courses				
Craft Courses				
Hand in Hand Young Parents Group				
Music Workshops				
Parenting Group				
Pre-Birth Experience Group				
Sure Start Drop In				
Sure Start Fun & Craft Activities				
Sure Start Parents Group				
Sure Start Summer Activities				
Stress Busting sessions				

Q9. Have you been to a Parent and Toddler group in the last year?

Yes No

- If no, go to Q9.
- If yes, which Parent and Toddler group have you been to?

.....

Q10. How satisfied were you with the Parent and Toddler group you attended? (Please tick one box).

	<i>Please tick one box</i>
Very satisfied	
Satisfied	
Dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	

Q11. Has your child been to a playgroup or nursery in the last year?

(Please note that a playgroup or nursery is a group where you can leave your child).

Yes No

- If no, go to Q13.
- If yes, which playgroup or nursery has your child been to?

.....

Q12. How satisfied were you with the playgroup or nursery your child has been to? (Please tick one box).

	<i>Please tick one box</i>
Very satisfied	
Satisfied	
Dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	

Q13. Overall how satisfied are you with the services available to families with young children in Blacon?

	<i>Please tick one box</i>
Very satisfied	
Satisfied	
Dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	

Q14. Do you think that services for families with young children in Blacon have got better or worse during the last year?

	<i>Please tick one box</i>
Better	
Stayed the same	
Worse	
Don't know	

Q15. Do you think that Blacon has enough services available to help families with young children?

Yes No

Q16. Are there any other services you would like to receive that would help you to care for a child under 4 years old?

Your suggestion:

Q17. Do you get enough information about the services that are already available in Blacon (such as those mentioned in this survey)?

Yes No

Q18. Before you got this letter, had you ever heard of Sure Start?

Yes No

If no, please go to Q21.

If yes - please answer Q19 and Q20 before you go to Q21.

Q19. How did you hear about Sure Start?

	<i>Please tick all of the ways you heard about Sure Start</i>
Through a friend or family member	
Information through post	
Picked up a leaflet or saw a poster	
Saw an advertisement	
From a Health Visitor	
From a Midwife	
From Social Services	
From a Pre-School or Nursery	
From a SureStart worker	
Other (please say how.....)	

Q20. Before you got this letter, did you know that there is a Sure Start Programme providing services for families with young children in Blacon ?

Yes No

Q21. Which of the following forms of childcare have you used in the last year, if any?

	<i>Please tick all those you have used</i>
Help from your partner/ex-partner	
Free babysitting by another family member	
Free babysitting by a friend	
Paid babysitter	
Childminder	
Crèche	
Fee-charging day nursery	
Support from the Park Family Centre	
Other (please say what.....)	

Q22. Do you ever struggle to get help with childcare when you really need it?

Yes No

Finally, we would like to ask a few questions about you. This will help us to understand how different groups of people feel about local services.

A. What is your relationship with the child named on the letter we sent to you?

	<u>Please tick one box</u>
Mother	
Father	
Step-parent	
Grandparent	
Other relative	
Paid carer	
Other (please say what.....)	

B. How many children under 16 live with you?

C. If you are the child's parent, are you:

A lone parent Living with your child's other parent Living with another partner

D. Are you - or anybody who lives in your home - in a paid job for more than 16 hours per week at the moment?

Yes No

E. What is the ethnicity of your child?

	<u>Please tick one box</u>
White (British)	
White (Irish)	
White (other)	
Mixed (White/Black Caribbean)	
Mixed (White/Black African)	
Mixed (White/Asian)	
Mixed (other)	
Black/Black British (Caribbean)	
Black/Black British (African)	
Black/Black British (other)	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
Other Asian	
Other ethnic group	

Thank you for telling us about being a parent/carer in Blacon!
Do not forget to fill in your entry to the *Prize Draw!*

Sure Start Parent Survey: Prize Draw!!!!

First prize: £50 of Argos vouchers

Second prize: £25 of Argos vouchers

Simply fill-in your details here and return this questionnaire by 17th
September 2003 and we will enter you into the prize draw.

Your child's name:

Your address:

Your telephone number:

Please return to: FREEPOST BLACON SURE START in the enclosed envelope.

Sure Start (Blacon) Programme Evaluation Participant Information Sheet

The Sure Start Programme aims to provide support to families with children under 4 years old. It is very important to find out if Sure Start is being successful in supporting these families. We are asking you to take part in this survey so we can find out if local families are getting the support they need. We are also interested in your ideas about how local families could be supported in a better way.

Why do we need to do the research?

We need to do this research to find out if Sure Start is meeting the needs of local families. This will help Sure Start to improve its services and tell us if any new services are needed.

Why are you being asked to take part?

You are being asked to take part because you live in the local area and have a child who is 4 years old or younger.

Who is organising the study?

The study is being organised by the Centre for Public Health Research at Chester College. It is a part of a 3-year evaluation of Sure Start that will finish in 2006.

What does it involve?

Taking part in this survey involves answering some questions about what support you think local families need and how well those needs are being met. This will take about 10 minutes of your time. No one will know what you have said to us because your name will not be on the completed survey. You may give your name on a prize draw slip but this will be separated from the questionnaire before we read it. We will also not use your name in our report.

Your rights

You can choose not to take part in the survey – this will not stop you being entitled to use Sure Start or other services or from being involved in the operation of Sure Start.

If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

Julia Rouse at the Centre for Public Health Research at Chester College on 01244 375 444 (extension 2023).

Thank you for your interest and co-operation in this research. Without your help we could not know what the community and professionals think about the support available to local families.

Appendix 2

Other services that respondents would like to receive that would help in caring for a child under four years old

Other services that respondents would like to receive that would help in caring for a child under four years old

The following comments were made by 25 respondents.

Comments which include a reference to childcare services

Decorating the library & making it more child friendly. More help with childminding as I don't get any help off my family. Easy access buses. (Respondent 5)

Nursery help to aid me more on to further education. Very hit and miss whether I get to hear about courses. How about using text messaging on mobiles? (Respondent 10)

Children go to nursery in the morning but would like afternoon provision. (Respondent 16)

More free nurseries for people who are not on benefits and work but can't afford nursery fees out of wages. (Respondent 34)

More playgroups and a crèche. (Respondent 44)

Easy access bus would be so helpful running regularly through Blacon. I really struggle with 3 children, pushchair and shopping. Healthy eating talk. I'd like to know more about Es and all the colourings in food, what to look out for etc. Crèche facility, where for a small charge you could leave children and pop into town for an hour. (Respondent 72)

Nursery that takes children with nappies if you have trouble getting child out of them. (Respondent 80)

Comments which include a reference to developments of existing services and/or additional types of service

Physical play activities; tumbletots, baby gymnastics etc. (Respondent 15)

I'd like to see more of a course for first aid for yourself and for your child. (Respondent 17)

Services for 5-10 year olds would be useful. (Respondent 18)

I don't know but always up for new ideas. Would like to see some sort of campaign for play parks. The play parks in Blacon are unsafe, dangerous, I would not take my children to them, there is nowhere in Blacon where you can go sit with them play and feel safe I take mine to Hoole and Christleton parks. (Respondent 22)

Befriending scheme (not for me but for others). (Respondent 23)

Physiotherapy, baby massage, parenting group, stress busting sessions. (Respondent 24)

Tumble tots. Safe outside play area i.e. no glass, dog mess, rubbish etc. lying around. More drop-ins/activities when the school holidays have finished. (Respondent 25)

More indoor soft play areas. Safer outdoor play areas. (Respondent 37)

Alternative days for parent and toddler drop-ins. I work Mondays so always miss out. More information on activities suitable for young toddlers (pre-school). (Respondent 52)

1) I think that a clean park for children that is safe i.e. glass, for them to play in. 2) Classes for young children's development, approx 1½-4 year old (alphabet, numbers etc...). 3) Exercise/dance classes for children. (Respondent 54)

I would have liked to have enrolled on the paediatric first aid course, unfortunately it is operating on a day I work. There doesn't seem to be any courses running during evenings. I'm sure I would not be the only resident to benefit from evening courses? (Respondent 56)

As my child has just started school I would like to be able to help him progress in reading and writing etc. but I am unsure how to without him and myself losing patience. (Respondent 59)

I would be very keen to discuss my ideas for new improved parks in Blacon that are maintained on a daily basis by an employed park attendant. At the moment I am having to travel to Hoole and Christleton to take my children to the playground as I am NOT satisfied with the safety of the play areas in Blacon. (Respondent 61)

Better things for the under 7s. More little clubs, stuff like that. (Respondent 65)

A mini version of the adventure playground needs to be put on the other side of Blacon. The outdoor facilities in these areas are completely inadequate, and when living in a flat there is no option to go and play in your garden. Why did the council not put some sort of park into their new developments? (Respondent 67)

I myself lack confidence, and going to groups along with my 2 year old is very difficult. I would appreciate more help in actually getting out, support to help me while I'm out with my child. (Respondent 75)

Comments about information

Sometimes it (information) comes to late for me to get involved. (Respondents79)

More information.(Respondent 81)

Appendix 3

Tables with additional information

Appendix 3

Tables with additional information

- Table 1 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who, in the last year, had used mainstream services not directly funded by Sure Start.
- Table 2 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who used the Sure Start services.
- Table 3 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who attended Sure Start groups.

Table 1 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who, in the last year, had used mainstream services not directly funded by Sure Start

Mainstream service used...	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Number using service
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Family Support Worker	3	75	1	25	0	0	4
Midwife	21	70	7	23	2	7	30
Health Visitor	34	62	21	38	0	0	55
Speech & Language	3	38	5	63	0	0	8
Physiotherapy	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Library	18	46	19	49	2	5	39
Adult Education	13	54	9	38	0	0	24
Employment/Training Advice	2	50	2	50	0	0	4
Hatton Rd Family Centre	1	33	2	67	0	0	3

(Not all of the respondents who used a service reported on their level of satisfaction.)

Table 2 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who used the Sure Start services.

Sure Start service used...	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Very Dissatisfied		Number using service
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Early Learning Link Worker	8	100	0	0	0	0	8
Family Support Worker	7	78	2	22	0	0	9
Midwife	18	82	3	14	1	5	22
Health Visitor	13	81	2	13	1	6	16
Nursery Nurse	3	60	2	40	0	0	5
Volunteer Coordinator	7	70	2	20	1	10	10

Table 3 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who attended Sure Start groups.

Sure Start group attended....	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Baby Massage	3	60	2	40	0	0
Breastfeeding Support Group	1	50	0	0	1	50
Computer Courses	2	67	0	0	1	33
Craft Courses	13	59	8	36	0	0
Hand in Hand Young Parents Group	1	50	0	0	1	50
Music Workshop	3	33	6	67	0	0
Pre-birth Experience Group	5	83	1	17	0	0
Parenting Group	4	44	3	33	0	0
Sure Start Drop In	17	68	7	28	0	0
Sure Start Fun & Craft Activities	10	50	8	40	1	5
Sure Start Parents Groups	2	17	8	67	1	8
Sure Start Summer Activities	16	76	4	19	0	0
Stress Busting Sessions	8	62	4	31	0	0

(Not all of the respondents who used a service reported on their level of satisfaction.)

Appendix 4

Parent and toddler groups attended in the last year

Appendix 4

Parent and toddler groups attended in the last year

Parent and Toddler Group attended....	Number
Unknown	8
Jigsaw	6
Hoole/Hoolitots Group	5
Matthew Henry Church Group	5
Playbox	3
Boughton Group	2
Northgate Arena Group	2
Deepoint Group	1
Kingsway Group	1
Riley Hall	1
Saughall Group	1
St. Henry's Church	1
St. Matthew's Church Group	1
Sure Start Drop In	1
United Reformed Church	1

Appendix 5

Playgroups or nurseries attended in the last year

Appendix 5

Playgroups or nurseries attended in the last year

Playgroup or nursery attended...	Number
Unknown	8
Stepping Stones	6
Blacon Infants Nursery	3
Jollytots	3
St. Theresa's Play Group	3
Victoria Infant School	3
Highfield School Play Group	2
Chimneys	1
Deepoint Nursery	1
Kids Unlimited	1
St. Mary's-On-The-Hill	1