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**Ellesmere Port Sure Start  
Parent Satisfaction Survey 2003**

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**November 2003**

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## Executive Summary

The 2003 Ellesmere Port Sure Start Parent Survey was conducted by the Sure Start Evaluation Team in the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR) at University College Chester. It was commissioned and funded by Ellesmere Port 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, if they did not respond, by telephone and/or door-to-door. A total of 76 questionnaires were completed.

### Key findings

#### Awareness of Sure Start

- Almost all families are aware of Sure Start.
- Four out of ten 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, although many families who use the library have not registered their Sure Start child as a member of the library.
- Between three and four out of every ten families have received the Sure Start Book Start Pack and/or the Sure Start Safety Pack. Take-up of Safety Pack was lower among lone parents.
- Individual Sure Start groups are attended by relatively small numbers of families. In some cases, this is because the group is aimed at a very specific group of families. The most widely used service is the Toy Library.
- Parent and toddler groups are accessed by approximately a quarter of families. As all families are eligible to attend these groups, there is potential for improvement here.
- Almost half of all children attended a play group 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.
- Eight out of ten families said they thought that services for families had improved in the last year.
- Satisfaction was high for 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.



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- A few families expressed dissatisfaction with a small number of individual services. It is unclear whether dissatisfaction related to the quantity of the service provided or the nature of the service.
  - 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.

### **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.
- Despite widespread access to family support, half of all families reported that they sometimes struggle to find childcare when they really need it.
- Lone parents have particular difficulty accessing the childcare they need.
- Families made specific recommendations about the help they would like to receive with childcare. This included help for family members to become registered childminders, a 'babysitting' vetting process and greater availability of flexible and affordable day care.

### **Recommendations**

- The survey includes many practical recommendations made by families about how services can be improved.
- In addition, the CPHR researchers recommend the following to enable further progress towards the Sure Start targets and to produce greater engagement with the local community:
  - the 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 reasons for family dissatisfaction with a small number of services should be explored, with a focus on service development;
  - the take-up of Sure Start packs should be monitored, and followed-up, using the Sure Start Database;
  - Sure Start groups and parent and toddler groups should develop action plans to boost participation rates;
  - the Sure Start evaluators should explore some of the findings in the survey in more depth, using qualitative methods;
  - the 2004 parent survey should include some further questions, to explore issues that were not covered in this year's study.

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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 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, Ellesmere Port Sure Start commissioned the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR), University College Chester to undertake research to understand how well the Ellesmere Port 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, very dissatisfied with local services for young children.

This survey of families in the area was undertaken in collaboration between the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR) and Ellesmere Port Sure Start in September 2003. This 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 Ellesmere Port 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 level of knowledge of Sure Start services;
- obtain comments about services for families with young children;
- to inform service development by Sure Start and partnering agencies.

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## Chapter 2

### Study design and methodology

#### 2.1 Study design

This study of users' satisfaction with Sure Start services in Ellesmere Port 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. Some non-respondents to the postal survey were also approached by telephone and/or door-to-door to participate in the study. 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 aged under 4 who lived within the Sure Start area and who were born between September 1999 and June 2003. The sample was drawn from the Child Health Database, which is the most comprehensive information source about the local population available to Sure Start. The Child Health Database is maintained by Cheshire West Primary Care Trust. This database was used in preference to the Sure Start Database to ensure that the sample included parents and carers who are not registered with Sure Start.

The population was sampled in two phases. In the first phase, a random selection of 1 in 8 eligible children was selected and their parent/carers contacted. This generated an initial sample of 116 parent/carers. In the second phase, an additional 1 in 8 sample was selected and approached to take part. This second sample was designed to exclude parents/carers already approached in the first phase and included 98 additional parent/carers.

#### 2.3 Design of the questionnaire

The questions included in the questionnaire related to:

- use of 'mainstream' and Sure Start services and groups;
- satisfaction with services used;
- use and access to childcare;
- socio-demographic data in relation to: number and ages of children in the family; whether the parent/carer is a lone parent, living with 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.

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The questionnaire was developed by the CPHR in association with the Ellesmere Port Sure Start Programme.

#### **2.4 Survey methods**

The survey was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the initial sample of 116 families was sent a questionnaire, prize draw slip, covering letter, participant information sheet and 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, as approved by the South Cheshire Local Research Ethics Committee. A copy of the questionnaire (including the prize draw slip), the covering letter and the participant's information sheet can be found in Appendix 1.

The covering letter asked parent/carers to return the questionnaires by a particular deadline, using the reply-paid envelope. After this deadline, non-responders were surveyed by telephone if they were registered with Sure Start (telephone numbers for families not registered with Sure Start were not available). Parent/carers who could not be reached by telephone were then approached door-to-door by Sure Start staff. Responders to the telephone and door-to-door elements of the survey were entered into a separate prize draw to the postal responders.

In the second phase, the additional 98 families were sent a questionnaire. Due to time constraints, and the inadequacy of the response rate, the second sample was not followed-up in a telephone or door-to-door survey.

#### **2.5 Survey schedule**

The timetable for the administration of the questionnaires and conduct of the different elements of the survey were as follows:

##### **Phase 1**

Mailing of questionnaires	3 September 2003
Closing date for return of postal questionnaires	15 September 2003
Conduct of telephone survey	15-17 September 2003
Conduct of door-to-door survey	17-26 September 2003

##### **Phase 2**

Mailing of questionnaires	18 September 2003
Closing date for return of postal questionnaires	26 September 2003

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## **2.6 Response rates**

Eight postal questionnaires were returned as "no longer at this address". In addition, the door-to-door survey found that 8 families did not live at the stated address. These 16 families were removed from the sample for the purpose of calculating the response rate, giving a new sample size of 198 families.

A total of 76 questionnaires were included in the analysis. Of these, 37 were returned by post, giving a response rate for the postal surveys of 19%. An additional 39 questionnaires were completed through the telephone and door-to-door surveys. This generated an overall response rate of 38%.

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 214 questionnaires were sent out, 16 of which were found to be sent to an out-dated address, giving a new sample size of 198. Of these, 76 responses were received by the closing date, giving a response rate of 38%.

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.

#### 3.2 Characteristics of the respondents and their families

Of the 76 respondents, 96% (73 people) were mothers and 4% (3 people) were fathers.

Of the 73 mothers:

- 44% (32) were lone parents;
- 55% (40) were living with the child's other parent;
- 1% (1) was living with another partner.

All three of the fathers were living with their child's other parent.

With regard to employment status within the families, 62% (47) 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

The number of children living in the respondents' homes is summarised in Table 3.3. Nineteen respondents (25% of families) had three or more children under sixteen living with them. The remainder had one or two children.

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

**Table 3.3 The number of children living with respondents**

Number of children under 16	Number of families	Percent
1	30	39
2	27	36
3	12	16
4	3	4
6	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

Ninety six percent of respondents (73 people) said the child to whom the survey related (a Sure Start child) was white (British). The remaining three were reported as:

- mixed (White/Black African) (1 family);
- mixed (Other) (1 family);
- other Ethnic Group (1 family).

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

Ninety seven percent of respondents (74 people) said that they had heard of Sure Start before receipt of the questionnaire. Table 3.4 below summarises where people heard about Sure Start. The most common sources of information were:

- health visitor (cited by 46% of respondents);
- information through the post (cited by 43% of respondents);
- midwife (cited by 32% of respondents);
- a friend or family member (cited by 29% of respondents).

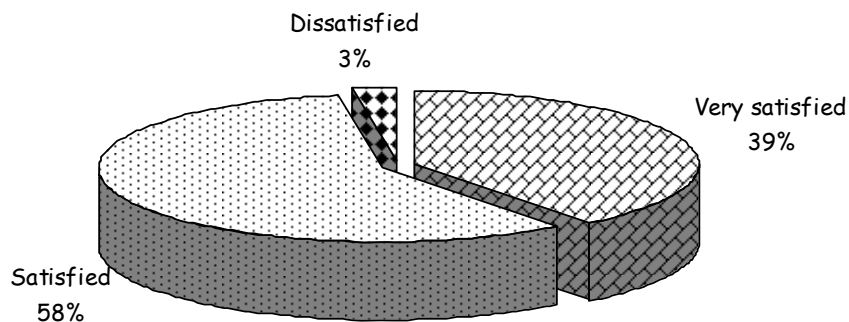
**Table 3.4 Sources of information about Sure Start**

Heard about Sure Start from.....	Number	Percent
Health Visitor	35	46
information through post	33	43
Midwife	24	32
a friend or family member	22	29
SureStart Worker	17	22
leaflet or poster	10	13
Pre-School or Nursery	8	11
an advertisement	5	7
Social Services	3	4
Other	6	8

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The overall level of satisfaction with services for families with young children in Ellesmere Port was high with 97% of respondents reporting they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied". This figure is important as it is an indicator of programme performance used by the Sure Start Unit. Figure 3.4 below summarises the levels of satisfaction with services for families in Ellesmere Port.

**Figure 3.4 Overall satisfaction with services available to families with young children in Ellesmere Port**



Of those responding, 80% (61 people) said they thought that services for families with young children had "got better" over the last year. Eleven percent of respondents (8 people) "didn't know" and 9% (7 people) thought services had "stayed the same".

Views were sought about whether or not people felt there were enough services to help families with young children in Ellesmere Port. Of the 75 people who responded:

- 73% (55 people) said there were enough services;
- 25% (19 people) said there were not enough services.

One person (1%) said they were 'not sure' if there were enough services and added:

*"But it is a lot better with Sure Start." (Respondent 46)*

Respondents were asked if there were other services they would like to receive that would help in caring for a child under 4 years old and 33 people (43% of respondents) commented. A variety of additional services were identified including:

- childcare support;
- child management advice, e.g. potty training, nutrition, safety;



- 
- specific groups/activities (for under 2s, special needs, children and dads, crafts);
  - safety equipment loan;
  - accessible buses;
  - outdoor play areas.

All of the comments made are listed in full in Appendix 2.

The comments made also indicated there was a need to consider:

- the timings of services (mentioned by four respondents), to accommodate working parents, gaps in afternoon, evening and holiday provision;
- provision of flexible childcare services (mentioned by nine respondents) which are affordable to enable parents to attend further education or to have time away from their child;
- the lack of, or timing of, information about the services available (mentioned by seven people).

When specifically asked if they received enough information about services that are already available in Ellesmere Port, 59% of those responding (44 people) said that they had received enough information, compared to 41% (31 people) who said that they did not get enough information. This lack of information was illustrated by two respondents who said:

*“Don't get all the information I probably should do.”  
(Respondent 30)*

*“There are a lot of services but you just don't really get told about them, you have to ask before you are told.” (Respondent 63).*

### **3.5 Use of, and satisfaction with, specific services**

Table 3.5 summarises the number and percentage of respondents who had used specific services in the last year. Respondents were asked to comment on services *not* directly provided by Sure Start. However, it is possible that some respondents who were provided with the health visiting, midwifery, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy services provided by Sure Start staff were unaware that these were Sure Start services. Consequently, their comments may relate to Sure Start as well as 'mainstream' services.

The most used service was health visiting with over eight out of ten respondents reporting that they had used a health visitor in the last year. Half of all respondents reported using the midwifery service.

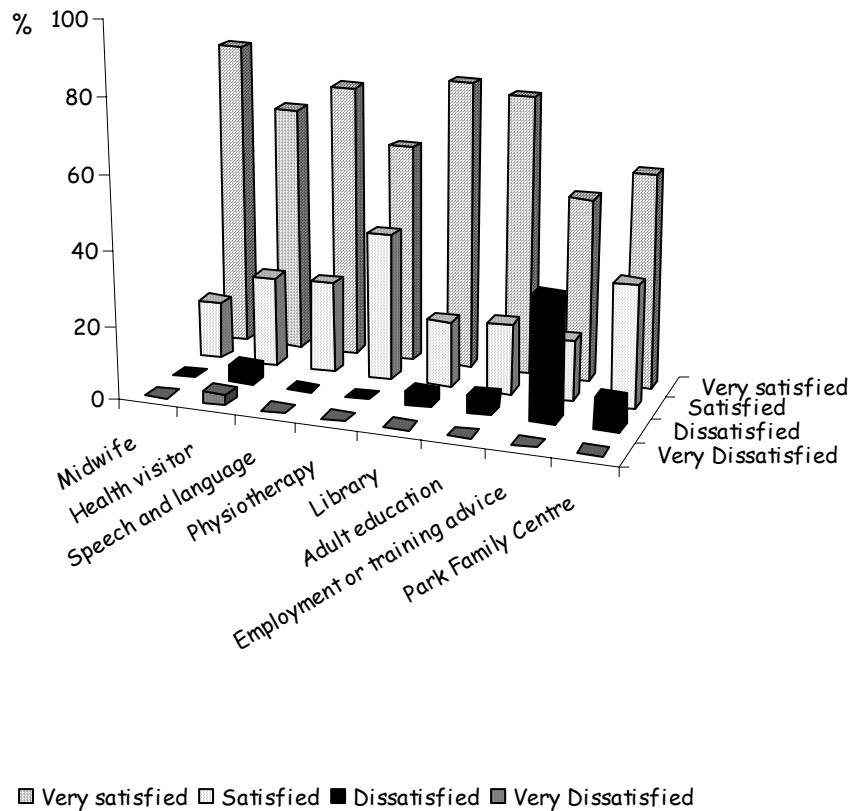
**Table 3.5 The number and percentage of respondents using specific services in the last year**

<b>Service used....</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Health visitor	65	86
Midwife	38	50
Library	29	38
Adult education or other college or short course	21	28
Park Family Centre	14	18
Physiotherapy	10	13
Speech and language	8	11
Employment or training advice	6	8

Satisfaction with individual services is expressed in terms of percentages throughout this report in order to aid comparison about levels of satisfaction with different services. However, it should be noted that the total number of people using some services, or reporting on their satisfaction with those services, is small. In these instances, percentage figures relating to different levels of satisfaction with the services relate to very small numbers of reports about the services. Consequently, caution should be exercised when interpreting these percentage figures

Overall, the satisfaction with services in Ellesmere Port was very high. Over 90% of the users of all but one of the services said they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied". However, a third of those using the employment and training advice service reported being "dissatisfied". It is unclear whether this dissatisfaction related to the quantity of the service available or to the nature of the service. Figure 3.5 illustrates the levels of satisfaction amongst those who used the services and Table 1 in Appendix 3 summarises the responses received. One person who used the library and two people who used the Park Family Centre did not report their level of satisfaction.

**Figure 3.5 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who used specific services**



### 3.6 Sure Start packs

Thirty-four percent of the respondents (26 people) reported that they had received the Sure Start Book Start Pack and of those:

- 42% (11) said it was "very helpful";
- 54% (14) said it was "helpful";
- 4% (1) said it was "not very helpful".

Analysis was conducted on the types of respondents who reported receiving Book Start Packs but little variation was found. Thirty-four percent of mothers (25 people) and 33% of fathers (one person) received the Sure Start Book Start Pack. Thirty-four percent of lone parents (11 people) and 35% (15 people) of those living with the child's other parent received the pack. The one person who was living with another partner did not report having received the Book Start Pack. Thirty-four percent of families (16 people) with someone in the home in employment for more than 16 hours a week and 34% (10 people) where no-one in the home was in employment for more than 16 hours a week received the Book Start Pack.

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

- 57% of those with 4 or more children (4 people) received the Book Start Pack;

- 32% of those with 1, 2 or 3 children (22 people) received the Book Start Pack.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents (28 people) reported that they had received the Sure Start Safety Pack. Of the 27 who responded about the helpfulness of the pack:

- 48% (13) said it was "very helpful";
- 41% (11) said it was "helpful";
- 11% (4) said it was "not very helpful".

Some variation was found in the type of respondents who received the Safety Pack. Thirty-eight percent of mothers (28 people), but none of the three fathers, reported having received the Sure Start Safety Pack. Twenty-eight percent of lone parents (nine people) received the pack compared with about 43% (19 people) of those living with a partner. Thirty-eight percent of families (18 people) with someone in the home in employment for more than 16 hours a week and 34% (ten people) where no-one in the home was in employment for more than 16 hours a week reported receiving the Safety Pack.

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

- 43% of those with 4 or more children (3 people) received the Safety Pack;
- 36% of those with 1, 2 or 3 children (25 people) received the Safety Pack.

### 3.7 Attendance at, and satisfaction with, Sure Start groups

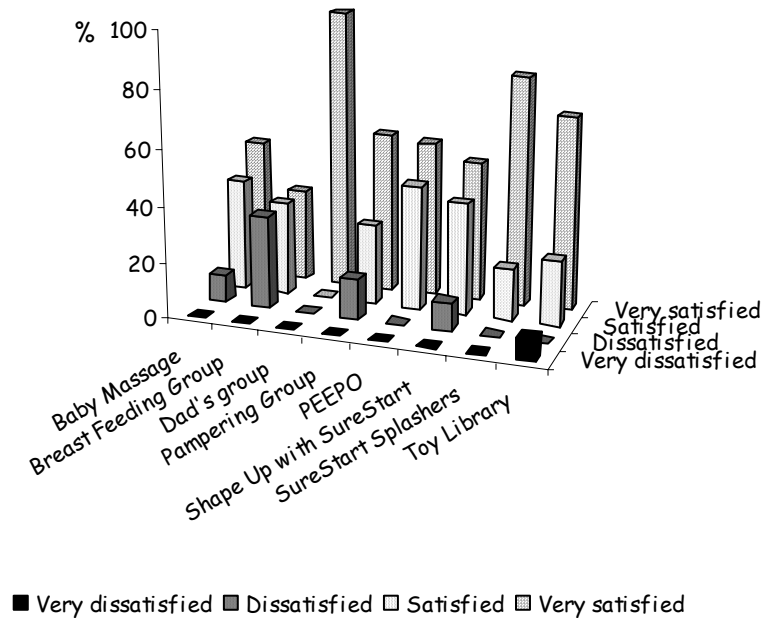
The questionnaire asked respondents to report on which Sure Start groups they had attended in the last year. These responses are detailed in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7 The number and percentage of respondents attending Sure Start groups in the last year.**

Sure Start Group attended...	Number	Percent
Toy Library	13	17
SureStart Splashers	11	14
Baby Massage	10	13
Shape Up with SureStart	10	13
PEEPO	9	12
Pampering Group	7	9
Breast Feeding Group	6	8
Dad's Group	1	1

Figure 3.7 summarises the levels of satisfaction amongst those who attended Sure Start groups in the last year and Table 3 in Appendix 3 gives the breakdown of responses received.

**Figure 3.7 The levels of satisfaction amongst those who attended Sure Start groups.**



The level of user satisfaction with the services was generally high. The following proportions of users of each service reported that they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the services they used in the last year:

- 100% (1 person) of those using the Dad's Group;
- 100% (9 people) of those using PEEPO;
- 100% (11 people) of those using Sure Start Splashers;
- 92% (12 person) of those using the Toy Library;
- 90% (9 people) of those using Baby Massage;
- 90% (9 people) of those using Shape Up with Sure Start;
- 86% (6 people) of those using the Pampering Group;
- 67% (4 people) of those using the Breast Feeding Support Group.

There was only one person who reported being "very dissatisfied" with a service, that being the Toy Library. A third (2 people) of those using the Breast Feeding Support Group said that they were "dissatisfied" with the group. It is unclear whether this dissatisfaction related to the quantity of the service available or the nature of the service provided.

### **3.8 Use of, and satisfaction with, parent and toddler groups**

Respondents were asked to report on any parent and toddler groups they had attended in the last year. Twenty-eight percent (21 people) reported that they had attended at least one parent and toddler group. Of those, 19 (90%) attended

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just one group, one person (5%) attended two groups and one person (5%) attended three groups. This gave a total of 24 'attendances' at parent and toddler groups over the year. The groups with the highest attendance were EPIC on a Friday (12 people), Messy Rascals (2 people) and Live Wires (2 people). A full list of the groups attended is given in Appendix 4.

Families reported that attending a parent and toddler group was satisfactory or very satisfactory in 92% (22) of cases. There were two people who reported that they were "dissatisfied" with groups they had attended. The groups were the EPIC and Stanney Community Centre. Again, the reasons for this dissatisfaction are unclear.

### **3.9 Use of, and satisfaction with, playgroups or nurseries**

Respondents were asked to report on any playgroups or nurseries they had attended in the last year. Just over half (40 people) reported that they had attended at least one playgroup or nursery. Of those, one person (2%) reported attending three playgroups or nurseries and the remainder attended one. The most well attended group was St Bernards (4 people). Six people did not record the name of the playgroup or nursery they attended. A full list of the groups attended is given in Appendix 5.

Forty people (95% of those using a playgroup or nursery) reported being either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the groups they attended. Six of these respondents did not record the name of the group they attended. There was one person who reported that they were "dissatisfied" with a group. The group was Trinity Methodist. The reason for this dissatisfaction is unknown.

### **3.10 Childcare**

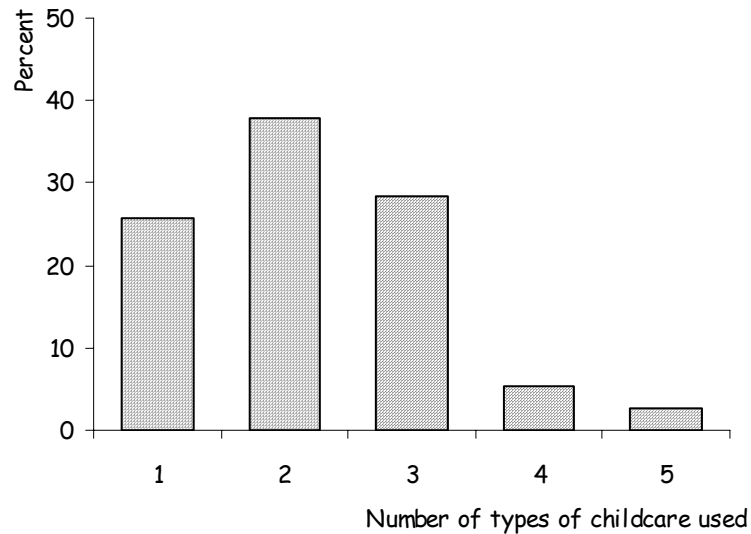
The survey asked respondents to report on their use of childcare over the last year. Of the 76 respondents:

- 79% (60 people) had used another family member;
- 57% (43 people) had used a partner or ex-partner;
- 24% (18 people) had used a friend;
- 18% (14 people) had used a crèche;
- 13% (10 people) had used a paid babysitter;
- 13% (10 people) had used fee charging day nursery;
- 5% (4 people) had used Park Family Centre;
- 4% (3 people) had used other forms of childcare;
- 3% (2 people) had used a childminder;
- 3% (2 people) had not used any childcare.

Of the 74 respondents who had used childcare, 26% (19 people) had used only one type of childcare over the last year. Eight percent (6 people) had used four or five. Figure 3.8 illustrates the distribution of the number of types of childcare used by respondents.

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**Figure 3.8 Distribution of the number of types of childcare used**



Sixty-one percent (33 people) of those responding to the question about struggling with childcare said that they had struggled to find childcare when they really needed it.

In homes where there was at least one person with a paid job for more than 16 hours a week, 43% of respondents (20 people) struggled to get help with childcare. This compared with 45% (13 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, 53% (17 people) struggled to get help with childcare, compared to 38% of respondents (16 people) who were living with the child's other parent. The one respondent who was living with another partner did not struggle to get childcare.

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## Chapter 4

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The 2003 Parent Satisfaction Survey provides an indication of the use of, and satisfaction with, services in Ellesmere Port. In particular, the use of multiple survey approaches ensured that families who are not registered with Sure Start (and who may not be accessing Sure Start services) have been included in the sample. It is worth noting that some staff reported that conducting the door-to-door survey was a useful form of outreach to families, making this a valuable process in service delivery as well as research.

The survey indicates that awareness of Sure Start is high in Ellesmere Port: 97% of respondents had heard of Sure Start. This awareness had been raised by Sure Start partners, including health visitors and midwives, as well as by Sure Start workers, mail-outs and word-of-mouth. Although parents were aware of Sure Start, four out of ten did not feel they receive enough information about the services Sure Start provides. Indeed, several respondents said the service they most need is more information about existing provision. Some parents also asked for 'new' services that, in fact, are already available. Again, this reflects their lack of knowledge about services. Demand for more information has arisen despite the effort being made by Sure Start 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 in Ellesmere Port are encouraging: 97% of respondents reported that they are either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with local services. In addition, 80% thought that services had got better over the last year, indicating that the investment in local services has resulted in tangible progress. We recommend that this finding is reported widely to all Sure Start staff and partners, as encouragement to on-going service development.

Results relating to the use of specific services confirm Sure Start's existing knowledge that health visiting and midwifery are the primary services accessed by young families in Ellesmere Port. Satisfaction with these services is high. Almost four in ten families also reported using the library. This is a much higher rate of usage than indicated by library membership among children under four in the Sure Start area (this was 11% in 2002-3). This may indicate that the library is acting more as a 'drop in' facility for families than as a lender of books (although parent/carers may be using their own or older children's library cards to borrow books for the under fours). We recommend that qualitative research is undertaken to explore how families are using the library and how families can be encouraged to continue their children's interest in books and stories at home.



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It is disappointing that a third of families who had accessed an employment and training advice service reported being "dissatisfied". We recommend that further qualitative research is conducted to ascertain the source of this dissatisfaction and to identify how services can be improved. In particular, this research should ask whether dissatisfaction results from the quantity of employment and training advice available or to the nature of these services. This work could also fruitfully include comparative evaluation of 'mainstream' and Sure Start employment and training advice services to identify outstanding needs and 'what works'.

Between three and four of every ten respondents had received the Sure Start Book Start Pack and/or the Safety Pack and most respondents found these useful, although the Book Start Pack was found to be more helpful than the Safety Pack. We recommend that Sure Start ensures that all families are made aware of their eligibility for these packs. Tracking of the distribution of 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 lone parents (who have a lower rate of take-up of the Safety Pack).

The number of families attending each individual Sure Start group is relatively small. The most well attended group was the Toy Library, again indicating that the library is becoming a recognised and valuable resource for local families. The least used groups were the Breast Feeding Support Group and the Dad's Group, although both of these are specialist groups whose attendance is likely to be limited. The level of satisfaction with the groups was high, with 7 of the 8 services having over 85% of "very satisfied" or "satisfied" users. Some dissatisfaction was expressed about the Breast Feeding Support Group. We recommend that qualitative research is undertaken to ascertain the source of this dissatisfaction and routes for service development, particularly as one of the Sure Start targets (as stated by the Government) is to increase rates of breastfeeding.

Approximately a quarter of respondents reported accessing a parent and toddler group within the last year. As all families with a child under four are eligible to use these groups, this rate is relatively low and indicates potential for further uptake. In particular, it may be worth promoting the idea that many of these groups are open to families with babies and not just 'toddlers'. This could also meet the need for more services for children under two years old, as expressed by some respondents. The question of whether the timing of parent and toddler groups meets the needs of users should also be explored. Almost half of respondents reported using a play group or nursery, which is a high percentage given that only older children are eligible to access these services.

The survey asked about the childcare available to, and used by families. The majority relied on support from 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. Sure Start

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could consider identifying these families and offering them targeted childcare support. The survey also indicates that access to family support does not protect families from struggling to find childcare when they really need it. Indeed, half of respondents reported that they sometimes struggled to access childcare. This problem was most acute among lone parents, probably because they have less family support and are less able to pay for childcare. Recommendations for service development in relation to childcare include:

- help to make family members 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.

Overall, nearly three quarters of respondents said there are now enough services for young families in Ellesmere Port. However, multiple suggestions were also given about services that are needed or improvements that could be made to existing provision. 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 frequency and depth of 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 a larger sample is selected in order to generate more responses and, so, 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 conclusion 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 to explore issues raised in the parent survey. This would involve giving their contact details, but CPHR would ensure that their responses remained anonymous.

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## **Appendix 1**

**The questionnaire, covering letter and the participant  
information sheet**

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## 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	
Park 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
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				
Park Family Centre				

### Q3. 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 5.
- **If yes**, please answer Q4 before going to Q5.

**Q4. 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				

**Q5. 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 Group	
Dad's Group	
Pampering Group	
PEEPO	
Shape Up with Sure Start	
Sure Start Splashers	
Toy Library	

**Q6. 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 Group				
Dad's Group				
Pampering Group				
PEEPO				
Shape Up with Sure Start				
Sure Start Splashers				
Toy Library				

**Q7. 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?

.....

**Q8. 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	

**Q9. 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 Q11.
- If yes, which playgroup or nursery has your child been to?

.....

**Q10. 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	

**Q11. Overall how satisfied are you with the services available to families with young children in Ellesmere Port?**

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

**Q12. Do you think that services for families with young children in Ellesmere Port have got better or worse during the last year?**

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

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**Q13. Do you think that Ellesmere Port has enough services available to help families with young children?**

Yes  No

**Q14. 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:**

**Q15. Do you get enough information about the services that are already available in Ellesmere Port (such as those mentioned in this survey)?**

Yes  No

**Q16. Before you got this letter, had you ever heard of Sure Start?**

Yes  No

If no, please go to Q19.

If yes - please answer Q17 and Q18 before you go to Q19.

**Q17. 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.....)	

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**Q18. Before you got this letter, did you know that there is a Sure Start Programme providing services for families with young children in Ellesmere Port?**

Yes  No

**Q19. 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.....)	

**Q20. 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?**

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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	

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

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## **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 10<sup>th</sup> September 2003 and we will enter you into the prize draw.

Your child's name:

Your address:

Your telephone number:

*If you have lost your reply-paid envelope, return to: Sure Start, Whitby Lodge, Stanney Lane, Ellesmere Port, CH64 6QY.*

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Whitby Hall Lodge, Stanney Lane  
Ellesmere Port, CH65 6QY  
Tel: 0151-355-2168

Dear Parent

September 03

**Sure Start Parental Survey 2003**

As you may know SureStart 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 15<sup>th</sup> September.**

If you've not managed to return it by 15th 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

Jill Cooper  
SureStart Health Visitor

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**Sure Start (Ellesmere Port) 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 you 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 note 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.**

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## Appendix 2

**Other services that respondents would like to receive that could help in caring for a child under 4 years old**

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## Appendix 2

### Other services that respondents would like to receive that could help in caring for a child under 4 years old

The majority of comments were made in response to question 14, which asked "Are there any other services that you would like to receive that would help you to care for a child under 4 years old?" Some respondents made additional comments at other points in the survey questionnaire.

Thirty-three respondents made comments and these are listed and grouped below follows:

- comments citing additional services, made in response to question 14;
- other comments about services, made in response to question 14 ;
- additional comments, not made in response to question 14.

#### Additional services

Some kind of babysitting service even if the parent had to pay some amount. I've got 3 children, all in a routine at night, they sleep. I've not been on a night out for 2 years. (Respondent 1)

Babysitting vetting service. (Respondent 2)

A drop-in centre due to the parent advisory group. If your child has been seen by parent advisory and has had sessions and been discharged by them maybe a drop in centre for more advice and to keep an eye on your child's behaviour if you're not happy. (Respondent 3)

Potty training courses. (Respondent 5)

Mother and toddler for babies before 2 years. (Respondent 13)

More nurseries/crèches. (Respondent 15)

Health and Safety/First Aid courses. (Respondent 16)

Last minute childcare. (Respondent 17)

More local groups. No money to pay mother (grandmother) to look after child-payment only offered to reg. childminder, not family. (Respondent 19)

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It would be nice to be able to go to work and be able to leave my 2 children with cheaper childcare. (Respondent 20)

Reasonable crèche when shopping. Better parks. Netball team. (Respondent 32)

I would like there to be another group to take my child but instead of 10am-12.00 maybe another one in the afternoon as my daughter doesn't get up till 9.00am and it's quite difficult to get her ready for 10.00am. (Respondent 41)

My child is nearly 4 now but when using the services provided for my son who has special needs I felt that for example Gem's Playgroup was not open enough only two mornings a week and it was the only place I felt I could leave him in a safe environment. (Respondent 46)

Maybe there could be a group for dads and tots that is available at weekends or after work, as my husband works full time and misses out on all the services that are available, he wants to be more involved and something at the weekend would be perfect to spend time with daddy doing something they could all enjoy. (Respondent 48)

Advice on food. (Respondent 52)

Craft groups. (Respondent 53)

Safety in the home - AFTER school with police talking to the kids about talking to strangers. Railway safety. (Respondent 57)

More equipment for toddlers in the local park areas. (Respondent 59)

Somewhere to be able to either lend or get help with the cost for safety gates and other safety items. (Respondent 69)

Looking forward to Childrens Centre. (Respondent 76)

### **Other comments**

I haven't received information about all your services, eg breast feeding, toddler groups, perhaps all parents could be informed of all services. (Respondent 7)

I haven't been offered any facilities for my 2 yr old daughter. More help with child minding. (Respondent 9)

But need better buses with low floor! (Respondent 10)

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More facilities for people either waiting to go back to work or college. Not just for single parents. (Respondent 11)

Difficult to get hold of health visitor. (Respondent 16)

Would like more info. about where services are. Have to look for info. Sometimes info. post too late. Don't know where to go for info. More info about courses. (Respondent 25)

Mailing system is too slow for parent to register with courses. (Respondent 28)

Better access for double pushchairs to shops and leisure services. (Respondent 39)

More mail shots to inform about services. More advertising. (Respondent 56)

There are a lot of services but you just don't really get told about them, you have to ask before you are told. (Respondent 63)

Change of times of some of the activities, sometimes awkward times to do what you set up. (Respondent 65)

#### **Additional comments**

Although not very often. (From Q15 whether the respondent got enough information about services.) (Respondent 41)

But it is a lot better with Sure Start. (From Q13 about whether there are enough services for families.) (Respondent 46)

Not happy with college facilities. (from Q11 where this was cited as the reason for being dissatisfied with this services overall.) (Respondent 11)

Toy Library closed for holidays. (From Q6 where this was cited as the reason for being 'dissatisfied' with toy library.) (Respondent 18)

Not enough staff at Shape Up with Sure Start. (From Q6 where this was cited as the reason for being 'dissatisfied' with Shape Up with Sure Start.) (Respondent 28)

Don't get all the information I probably should do. (From Q15 whether the respondent got enough information about services.) (Respondent 30)

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## Appendix 3

### Tables with additional information

- Table 1      The reported levels of satisfaction amongst those who used specific services.
- Table 2      The reported levels of satisfaction amongst those who used the Sure Start groups.

**Table 1 The reported levels of satisfaction amongst those who used specific services.**

Service used.....	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Very dissatisfied	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Midwife	32	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
Health visitor	44	68	16	25	3	5	2	3
Speech and language (for a child under 4)	6	75	2	25	0	0	0	0
Physiotherapy (for a child under 4)	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
Library (for a child under 4)	22	79	5	18	1	4	0	0
Adult education or other college or short course	16	76	4	19	1	5	0	0
Employment or training advice	3	50	1	17	2	33	0	0
Park Family Centre	7	58	4	33	1	8	0	0

**Table 2 The reported levels of satisfaction amongst those who used the Sure Start groups.**

Sure Start Group....	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Very dissatisfied	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Baby Massage	5	50	4	40	1	10	0	0
Breast Feeding Group	2	33	2	33	2	33	0	0
Dad's group	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pampering Group	4	57	2	29	1	14	0	0
PEEPO	5	56	4	44	0	0	0	0
Shape Up with SureStart	5	50	4	40	1	10	0	0
SureStart Splashers	9	82	2	18	0	0	0	0
Toy Library	9	69	3	23	0	0	1	8

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## Appendix 4

Parent and toddler groups attended in the last year

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## Appendix 4

### Parent and toddler groups attended in the last year

<b>Parent and Toddler Group attended...</b>	<b>Number</b>
EPIC Friday	12
Messy Rascals	2
Live Wires	2
Unknown	2
Parents and Tots	1
Music Makers	1
Toddler Taming	1
Tuesday AM??	1
Stanney Community Centre	1
PEEPO	1

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## Appendix 5

**Playgroups or nurseries attended in the last year**

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## Appendix 5

### Playgroups or nurseries attended in the last year

Playgroup or Nursery attended...	Number
Great Sutton	1
Stanney Grange	2
Stanney Oaks Day Nursery	2
WASPS Stanney Lane	2
Trinity (Methodist)	3
John Street	3
Cambridge Rd	1
Moston Lodge	1
Will Stockton	2
Vale Road	1
Wolverham School Nursery	2
St. Bernards	4
Stanlow Abbey	1
Childsplay	1
St. Saviours	1
Gems Playgroup	3
Heathfield Road Playgroup	2
College Playgroup	1
Ledsham Park	1
Playgroup at EPIC	1
Leapfrog	1
Unknown	6

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