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**Sure Start Blacon  
Parent Satisfaction Survey**

Conducted as part of the evaluation of  
Sure Start Blacon

**Centre for Public Health Research  
University College Chester**

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**November 2004**

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# Chapter 1

## Background

### 1.1 Introduction and national background

Sure Start is a major Government programme aiming to reduce the disparity between outcomes for children living in poverty and the wider child population. It was set up after the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review on services for young children. The review highlighted that services for young children were geographically patchy, of mixed quality and generally uncoordinated, with very little money spent on the under four age group. The review concluded that early co-ordinated and sustained provision for this age group could make a significant difference to child outcomes.

Sure Start was established 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 in order that progress can be monitored to establish whether, and to what extent, an individual programme has made a difference to children and families in a particular community.

More specifically, the Sure Start Unit requires local programmes to report on the proportion of parents eligible for Sure Start services, who are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with services for young children, in order to establish if Sure Start services are 'getting it right'. Satisfaction with services is central to the interests of local programmes (NESS, 2002) and, with thorough preparation, satisfaction surveys can also provide additional information about the local programme and the experiences of families, thus becoming a valuable tool for generating learning that can be used to inform future programme development.

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Satisfaction with services is important because families are more likely to engage with, and benefit from, services which meet their needs, rather than services which are geared towards meeting the perceived needs of these families. Therefore, increased satisfaction with services is likely to increase sustainability of services, as well as improve outcomes for children and families. Parent satisfaction surveys are considered to be a useful means of assessing satisfaction and identifying areas for development within local programmes (NESS, 2002).

## **1.2 Local background**

In order to fulfil this requirement Sure Start Blacon commissioned the Centre for Public Health Research (CPHR), University College Chester, to undertake research to establish how well the programme is working in terms of the objectives, targets and principles of Sure Start. More specifically, this research was commissioned to establish, 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.

The Blacon area lies in the North West part of the city of Chester, in Cheshire. Sure Start Blacon covers the CH15 postcode area, which is an area of 1.2 square miles. Blacon is served by Cheshire West Primary Care Trust (PCT). It is estimated that there are around 850 children aged 0-4 years living in the area (Chester City Council, 2004a).

Blacon Hall and Dee Point (both areas covered by Sure Start Blacon) were ranked 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respectively in an Index of Multiple Deprivation of Cheshire wards (Chester City Council, 2004b). In addition to this, both areas also ranked in the top 10% of English wards of multiple deprivation (Chester City Council, 2004b). As well as covering the wards of Blacon Hall and Dee Point, Sure Start Blacon also includes a small part of the Sealand ward in its catchment area.

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This survey of families in the area was commissioned by the Sure Start Blacon Programme in August 2004. This was the second survey of this nature to be carried out by the CPHR on behalf of the programme. The first survey was carried out in September 2003.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives**

The aim of this survey was to establish levels of satisfaction with services amongst parents/carers of children aged 0-4 years in the Sure Start Blacon area during the last year, and draw comparisons with findings from 2003.

The objectives of the survey were to:

- fulfil the national requirements for reporting levels of satisfaction with local Sure Start services overall;
  - review the use of services for families with young children;
  - review levels of uptake and satisfaction with individual services;
  - review levels of knowledge about Sure Start services;
  - obtain comments about services for families with young children;
  - review use of services in relation to a number of socio-demographic characteristics;
  - draw comparisons with results from the 2003 survey.
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## **Chapter 2**

### **Study design and methodology**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

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 they used. Data were collected using postal questionnaires sent to all eligible families across the Sure Start area.

Postal questionnaires have several disadvantages, for example, they can lead to low response rates, which can create a self-selecting bias, whereby those who return the questionnaire may have attitudes, attributes or motivations different from those who do not return them (Kumar, 1999). Furthermore, this method can be problematic for respondents who have limited literacy, and the lack of face-to-face interaction removes any possibility for clarification of issues (Kumar, 1999).

However, this lack of face-to-face interaction also has its advantages, as it offers greater anonymity, which increases the likelihood of obtaining accurate information from respondents (Kumar, 1999). Furthermore, this method offers the opportunity to obtain information from a large sample of people, at a relatively low cost (Bowling, 2002), and questionnaires can be distributed and returned quickly (Aldridge and Levine, 2001).

#### **2.2 The Sure Start population**

The target population for this survey was all parents or carers of children under four who lived within the Sure Start area. In September 2004, there were 894 eligible families. 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, was used to provide a list of eligible families. This database was used in preference to the Sure

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Start Database, to ensure that the sample included all parents and carers who were eligible to use Sure Start services but who had not registered with Sure Start (in line with guidance from the Sure Start Unit).

### **2.3 Design of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire was based on a template developed by the CPHR in association with Sure Start Widnes Trailblazer in 2003. The questionnaire was split into six sections. Section one contained questions relating to socio-demographic data and awareness of Sure Start Blacon; section two focused on use of and satisfaction with family support services; section three considered early education services; section four health services; section five other services; and the final section contained additional questions relating to the use of home-based services, the year in which participants had used services, client-initiated contact, and levels of overall satisfaction.

Questions relating to lone parent status and age were optional questions. This was added, after the Programme Manager consulted with local residents. These parents considered the questions to be of a personal nature and stated that they would be "put off" a questionnaire which required such information.

In addition to the areas mentioned, the questionnaire also allowed space for respondents to add their own comments about Sure Start Blacon services. A copy of the questionnaire, and prize draw leaflet can be found in Appendix 1. A participant information sheet was also included in each envelope, and a copy of this can be found in Appendix 2.

The 2003 satisfaction survey carried out by CPHR on behalf of Sure Start Blacon, was different from the 2004 survey. The main differences were in terms of the design of the questionnaire. A number of changes were made to the questionnaire, in order to make it more attractive and professional. It was hoped that these changes would

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encourage people to complete and return the questionnaire. Changes related to the colours used within the questionnaire, the length and size.

In addition to differences in the design and presentation of the questionnaire, the target population also differed. The 2003 survey took a sample of the eligible population (370), instead of surveying the total eligible population. Of the 370 questionnaires which were sent out, 81 were returned, giving a response rate of 22%. The 2003 survey worked on a more 'ad-hoc' basis by also giving questionnaires to those attending the Drop In and other Sure Start groups.

## **2.4 Survey methods**

A two phase approach was adopted in conducting the survey. Firstly, each member of the eligible population of parents/carers was sent a questionnaire, information leaflet and prize draw entry slip, participant information sheet and a reply-paid envelope (this was addressed to the family and not a named person). The information leaflet asked the parent/carer to return the completed questionnaire and prize draw leaflet in the reply-paid envelope by 24<sup>th</sup> September 2004. The prize draw leaflet was included as a detachable sheet in order that the completed questionnaires were anonymous. The participant information sheet contained details about why the research was being carried out, why the parent/carer had been selected to take part and the procedures in place to ensure the anonymity of responses.

The second phase of questionnaire distribution involved several members of the Sure Start Team, carrying out targeted door knocking and telephoning of parents/carers who had not yet returned their questionnaires. Staff took additional questionnaires out with them to eligible homes. This was also used as an opportunity to publicise the local programme, as well as specific services, and for workers to meet more members of their eligible population and encourage them to engage with the programme. An additional 70 questionnaires were distributed by Sure Start workers during phase two of the survey. Some targeted telephone calls were also made to residents (around 30)

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and some questionnaires were completed in sessions (approximately 12), in order to boost the response rate. Ten members of the Sure Start Blacon team were involved in this process. A database was maintained of all those who returned questionnaires to ensure that only one questionnaire from each family was included in the analysis.

## **2.5 Survey schedule**

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

<b>Mailing of questionnaires</b>	<b>3 September 2004</b>
<b>Follow up door knocking and telephone calls by Sure Start Blacon Team</b>	<b>Week beginning 13 September 2004</b>
<b>Closing date for return of completed questionnaires</b>	<b>24 September 2004</b>
<b>Prize draw</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> October 2004</b>

A member of the Sure Start Team notified the winner of the prize draw by telephone.

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## Chapter 3

### Results

#### 3.1 Introduction

In total, 113 questionnaires were returned. Three of these were void. An additional 12 were marked 'return to sender'. A total of 110 questionnaires were included in the analysis. This gave an overall response rate of 13%. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS).

A number of steps were taken to encourage the return of questionnaires. The questionnaire used clip art pictures in an attempt to enhance its visual appeal and make it bright and interesting. In addition to this a brightly coloured prize draw entry leaflet was also designed and included in each envelope. Furthermore, all respondents were entered into a prize draw as an incentive to participate in the survey.

The National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) document (2002), states that Sure Start Programmes should aim to achieve response rates of over 70%, and that if the response rate is below 50% the survey will not produce reliable results (NESS, 2002). Despite the response rate for this survey falling below this threshold, and that the responses are likely to contain a self-selecting bias, the results are useful in that they give some indication of service user satisfaction and socio-demographic data, as well as highlighting areas for future research and development. However, the findings should be viewed with caution because of these limitations.

As all respondents did not give answers to all questions the percentages are based on the total number of responses received for each question. The total number of respondents is detailed in each case. For the purpose of this analysis all figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

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### 3.2 Characteristics of respondents and their families

Of the 110 questionnaires included in this analysis, 99% (109) were completed by a female, and 36% (40) of the respondents were single parents. The age of the respondents varied and ranged from 16 to 55. These have been grouped into seven categories below in Table 3.2.1.

**Table 3.2.1 Age range of respondents**

Age range (years)	Frequency	Percentage
16 - 20	9	8
21 - 25	23	21
26 - 30	30	27
31 - 35	25	23
36 - 40	14	13
41 - 45	8	7
46 +	1	1
Total responses	110	100
Missing	0	0

### 3.3 The number and ages of children living with respondents

All of the respondents had at least one child aged 0-4 living with them at the time of the survey. In addition to this, 17% of the respondents had two children within this age group. 66% of respondents also had older children living with them. Table 3.3.1 overleaf shows the number of children aged 0-19 living with respondents, and Table 3.3.2 shows the ages of these children.

- Higher percentages of respondents had just one child aged 0-19 living with them (44%, 48), however, just over one in five (21%, 24) had three or more children living with them.
  - Of the 110 respondents there were 129 children aged 0-4 years.
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- Few respondents (6) had children over the age of 15, and only one of these had a child aged 19 living with them.

**Table 3.3.1 Number of children aged 0 – 19 living with respondents**

Number of children	Number of respondents with this number of children	Percentage
1	48	44
2	38	35
3	18	16
4	6	5
Total responses	110	100
Missing	0	0

**Table 3.3.2 Ages of children living with respondents**

Age range of children (years)	Number of children
0-4	129
5-9	39
10-14	28
15-19	6
Total	202

### **3.4 Knowledge of Sure Start Blacon Services**

Of the 110 respondents, 97% (107) knew that there were Sure Start services in the area (prior to this survey). Those who did not know of the Sure Start services all reported that they had never received any information about the services on offer.

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### 3.5 Overall use of, and satisfaction with, Sure Start Blacon services

Overall, 90% (99) of respondents had used one or more services offered by Sure Start Blacon. Of the 27 services which were included in this survey, a higher proportion of respondents (54%) had used the Dee Point Drop In than any other service. Of these, 86% (50) of respondents had used the service on more than one occasion. Similarly, 45% (49) of respondents had used the Pop In more than once.

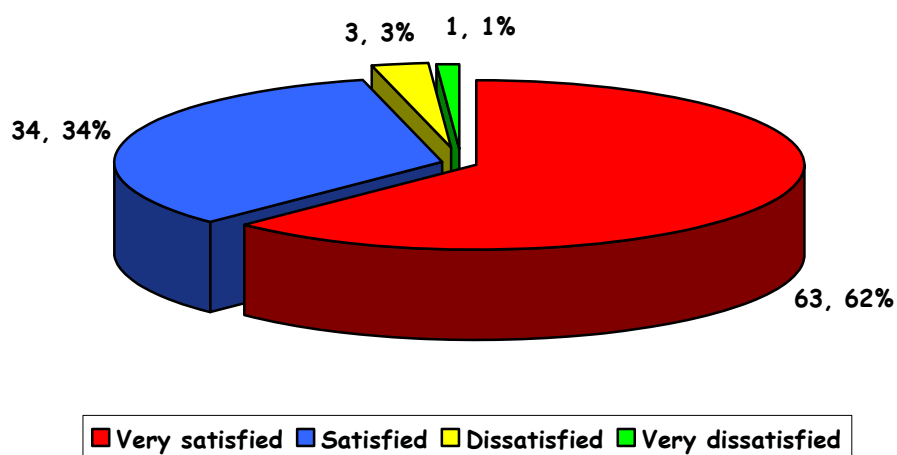
The service which was used by the smallest proportion of respondents was the Dads Group, with only 6% (6) reporting that they had used this service more than once. However, this figure may be related to the fact that 99% of the questionnaires were completed by females, who may have responded only about services *they* had accessed, and not those which their partner may have accessed. In addition to this, it cannot be assumed that this service is accessed by a small proportion of dads in Blacon, as the one male respondent had used this service. Furthermore, the low figure reported for the Dads Group is consistent with the fact that 36% of respondents reported themselves to be single parents.

Figure 3.5.1 overleaf shows levels of overall satisfaction with Sure Start Blacon services. This figure is important as this is the measure of satisfaction used by the Sure Start Unit. All but four of the respondents (96%) reported that they were satisfied overall with Sure Start Blacon services. Of these, 62% (63) of respondents reported that they were 'very satisfied' overall with the services provided by the local programme. Only three (3%) reported that they were dissatisfied, and one (1%) reported that they were 'very dissatisfied'. Nine respondents did not answer this question.

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**Figure 3.5.1 Overall satisfaction with Sure Start Blacon services**



It is apparent from the data that some services have been used only once by a number of respondents. These scores are likely to relate to services which, by their nature, may only need to be accessed once. Examples of such services are the Home Safety Scheme, and the Initial Visit by Midwives.

As a possible exploration of why respondents only used services once, all of the services were examined to see of those respondents who had used each service only once, how many found the services not to be helpful. This is shown in greater detail in Table 3.5.1 overleaf. Fifteen out of the 27 services available did not receive any counts of 'not helpful' from respondents who had only used the service once. The service with the highest score of 'not helpful' among those who had only used the service on one occasion was the Midwifery Loan Service. This service was regarded as 'not helpful', by all eight respondents who had used the service once (100%), as well as by one respondent who had used the service on more than one occasion.

Three of the five respondents (60%) who had used the Stay and Play service only once considered this service not to have been helpful, whilst one of the two (50%)

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respondents who had used the Smoking Cessation service had found this service not to have been helpful.

**Table 3.5.1 How helpful were services to those respondents who had only used services once?**

<b>Sure Start Blacon Service</b>	<b>Number used only once</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>	<b>Number stating 'not helpful'</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents stating 'not helpful'</b>
Drop In Hatton Road	6	5	1	16
Drop In Dee Point	8	7	0	0
Dads Group	2	2	0	0
Gym Club	4	4	0	0
Home Visiting Service	10	9	0	0
Parent Programme	5	5	0	0
Toy Library	11	10	1	9
Stay and Play	5	5	3	60
Book Worm and Book Start	8	7	2	25
Speech and language Support Services	5	5	1	20
Song and Rhyme Time	6	5	0	0
Talking Tots	2	2	0	0
2-Month Home Visit	13	12	1	8
Pop In	10	9	2	20
Initial Visit By Midwives	16	15	1	6
Breastfeeding Support	4	4	0	0
Parent Education	3	3	0	0
Baby Massage	14	13	0	0
Smoking Cessation	2	2	1	50
Home Safety Scheme	32	29	0	0
Bumps and Babes	5	5	1	20
Midwifery Loan Service	7	7	7	100
Crèche	9	8	0	0
Volunteer Service	0	0	0	0
Adult Learning Services	7	61	0	0
Parents Group	5	5	1	20
Barnardos Parents and Toddlers Group	3	3	0	0

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### 3.6 Family support services

Figures 3.6.1 and 3.6.2 overleaf show the numbers of respondents who had used Sure Start Blacon family support services, and how helpful they were reported to be by respondents. There are six services in this category.

- The service in this category which was used by the largest proportion of respondents was the Dee Point Drop In, 54% (58) of respondents having accessed the service at least once, 86% (50) of these had accessed the service on more than one occasion.
  - The Home Visiting Service was the service with the second highest proportion of respondents having used it, with a total of 37 (34%) respondents accessing the service at least once, 73% (27) of these had used the service more than once.
  - The Dads Group, was accessed by the smallest proportion of respondents. As previously explained, this may be largely due to the gender of the respondents.
  - In response to questions relating to how 'helpful' these services were, the Dee Point Drop In received the highest figures, with 68% (39) of those who had used the service finding it 'very helpful'. None of the respondents who had used this service considered it not to have been helpful.
  - The only service within this section which received counts of 'not helpful' was Hatton Road Drop In. One respondent reported that this service was 'not helpful'. This was also the only service within this category to score more counts of 'helpful' than 'very helpful'.
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Figure 3.6.1 Use of family support services

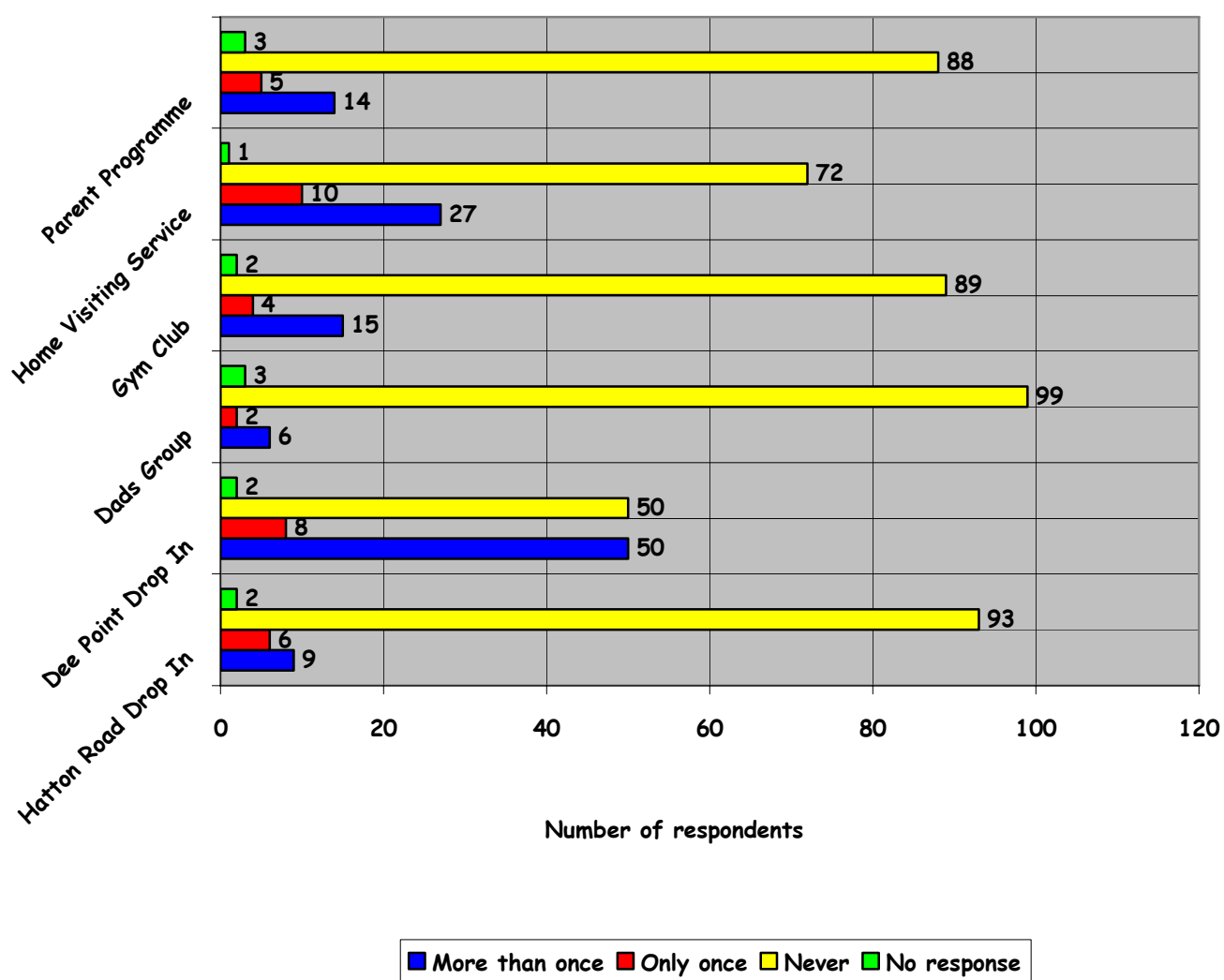
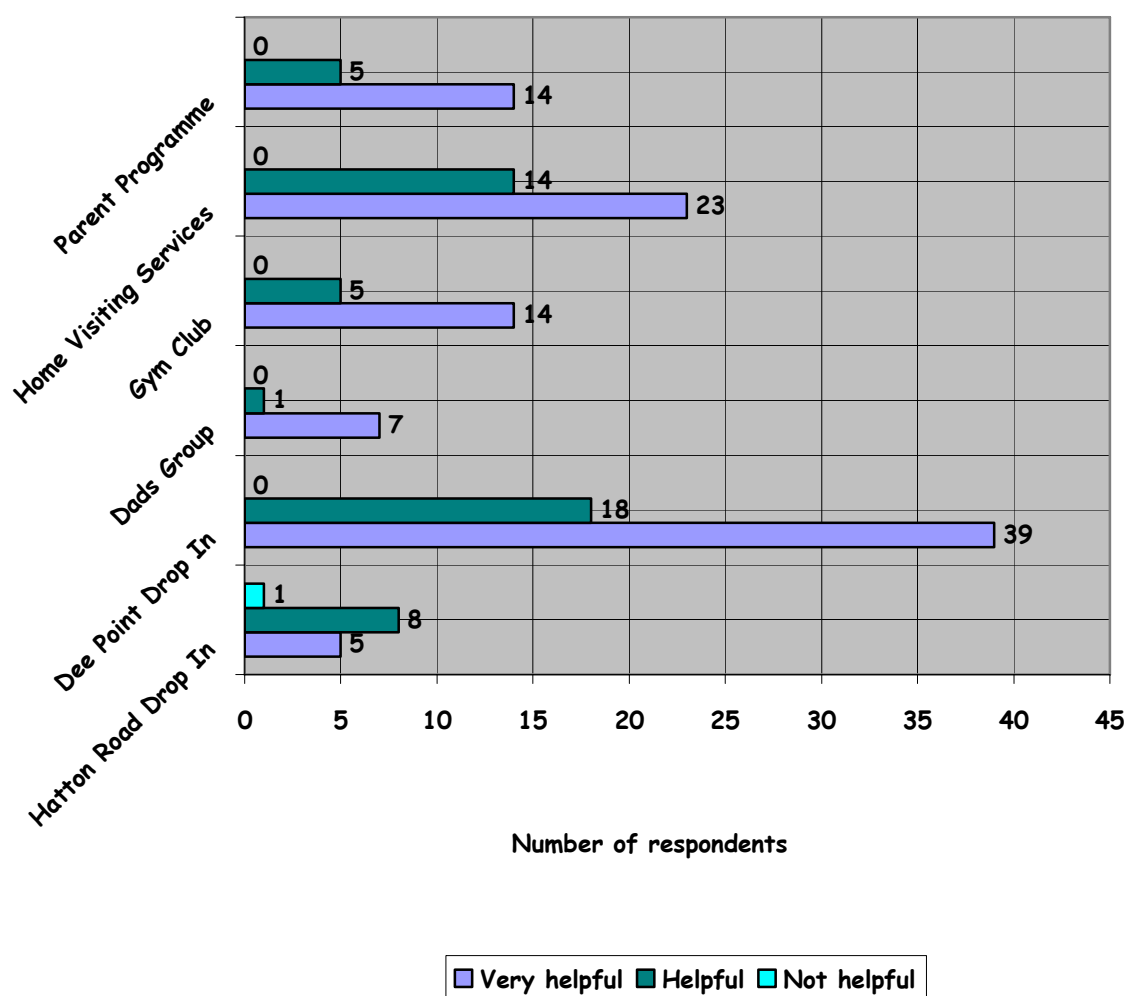


Figure 3.6.2 How helpful were family support services?



### 3.7 Early education services

This section focuses on the use and helpfulness of early education services within Sure Start Blacon. This is represented in Figures 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 overleaf. There are six services in this category.

- The service in this category which was used by the largest proportion of respondents was Stay and Play, with 41% (44) of respondents having used this service at least once, 89% (39) of these had used the service more than once.
- Book Worm and Book Start were also used by a sizeable proportion of respondents, with 37% (41) having used the service at least once, and 80% (33) of these more than once.
- The service which was used by the smallest number of respondents was Talking Tots, with only 7% (7) of respondents having accessed the service at all.

- Reported helpfulness with Stay and Play was high, with 62% (28) of those who had used the service reporting that they had found it 'very helpful'. Three respondents (7%) however reported that they did not find the service helpful.
- Book Worm and Book Start were services which were also considered to be helpful by a high proportion of respondents, with 60% (24) of those who had used the services reporting that they found them 'very helpful'. 5% (2) stated that this service was 'not helpful'.
- Song and Rhyme Time was also considered to be helpful by a large proportion of respondents, with 58% (18) of respondents commenting that this service was 'very helpful'.

**Figure 3.7.1 Use of early education services**

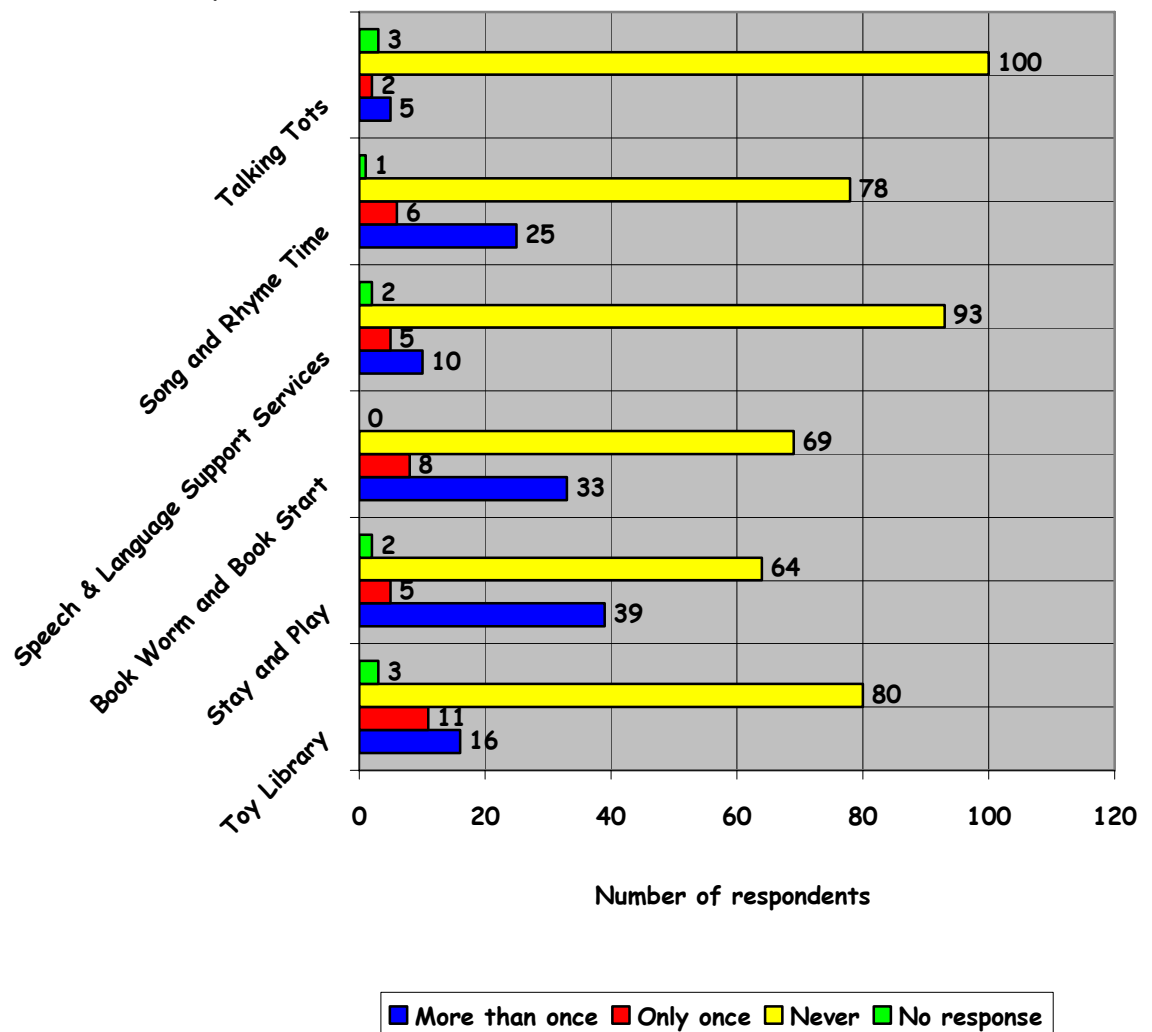
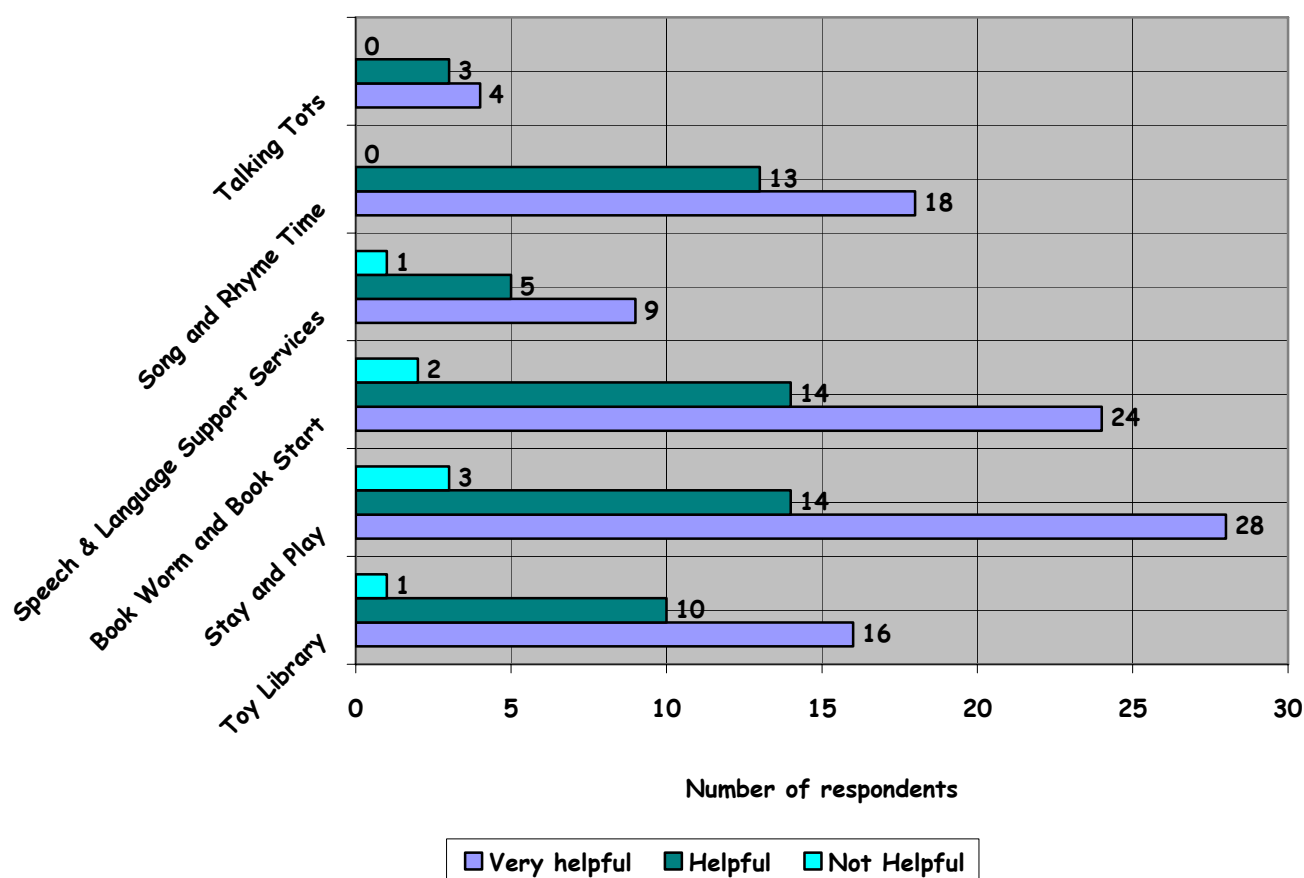


Figure 3.7.2 How helpful were early education services?



### 3.8 Health services

This section considers the proportion of respondents who had used Sure Start Blacon health services and how helpful they had found them. There are 10 services in this category. Results are presented in Figures 3.8.1 and 3.8.2 overleaf.

- Within this category the service used by the largest proportion of respondents was the Pop In. This service was used at least once by 55% (59) of the respondents.
- Another service which was accessed by a larger proportion of the respondents was the Initial Visit by the Midwives, 45% (48) of the respondents accessed this service.
- The service which was accessed by the smallest proportion of respondents was the Smoking Cessation service, with only 5% (5) of the respondents having used this service, and only 3% (3) of these more than once.

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- The service with the highest reported level of 'helpfulness' was the Breastfeeding Support service, with 80% (16) of respondents reporting that they had found the service to be 'very helpful'.
  - Similarly, 70% (16) of respondents reported that they had found the Parent Education service to be 'very helpful'.
  - The Pop In and Initial Visit by the Midwives were also considered to be helpful by a sizable proportion of respondents. In both cases 63% of respondents reported that these services had been 'very helpful' (this equates to 37 respondents for the Pop In and 30 for the Initial Visit by the Midwives).
  - The only service which received a larger proportion of negative responses from participants was the Midwifery Loan Service. Nine (50%) respondents who had used this service stated that it was 'not helpful'. However, none of these respondents commented on why they considered this service not to have been helpful.
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Figure 3.8.1 Use of health services

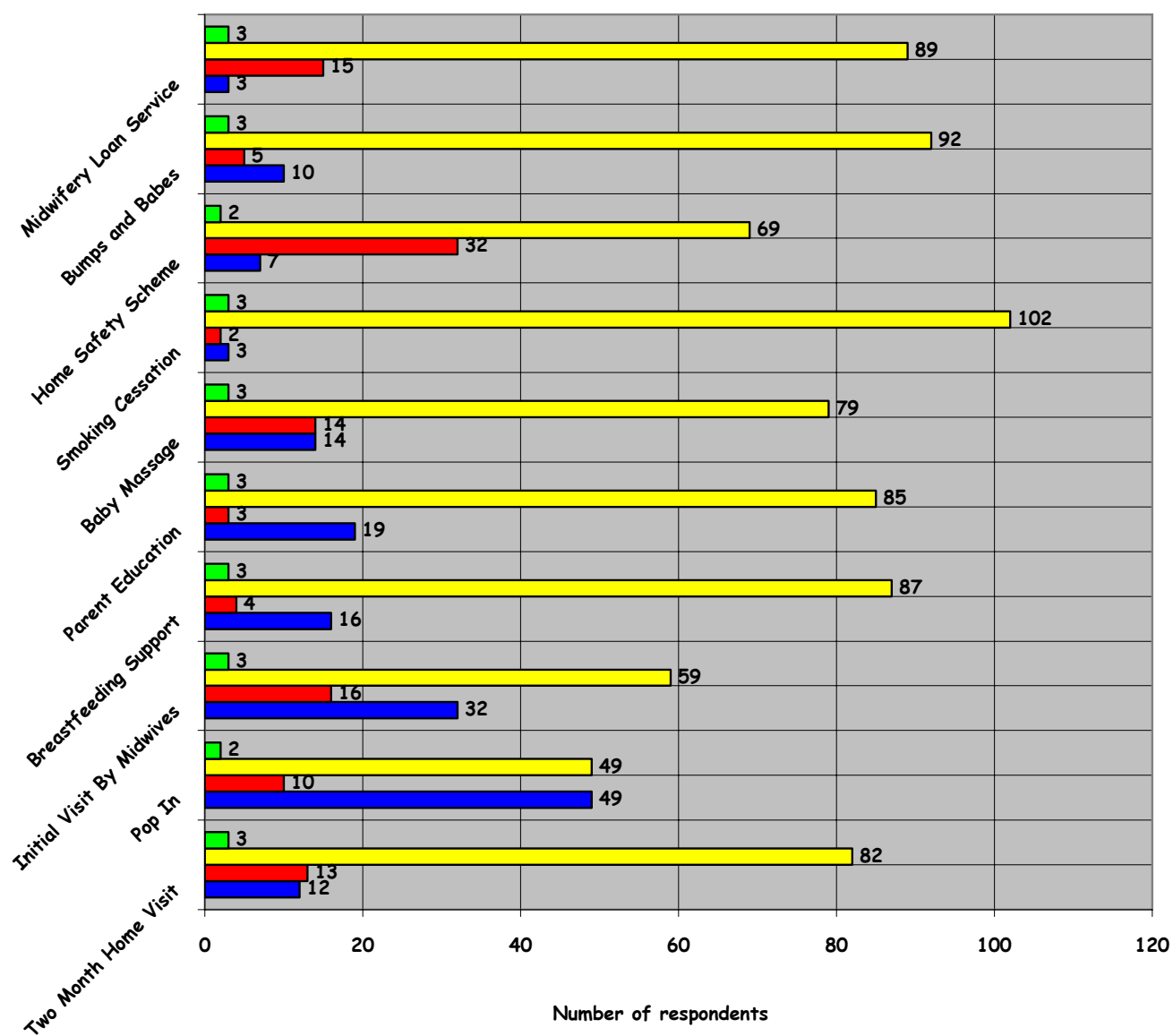
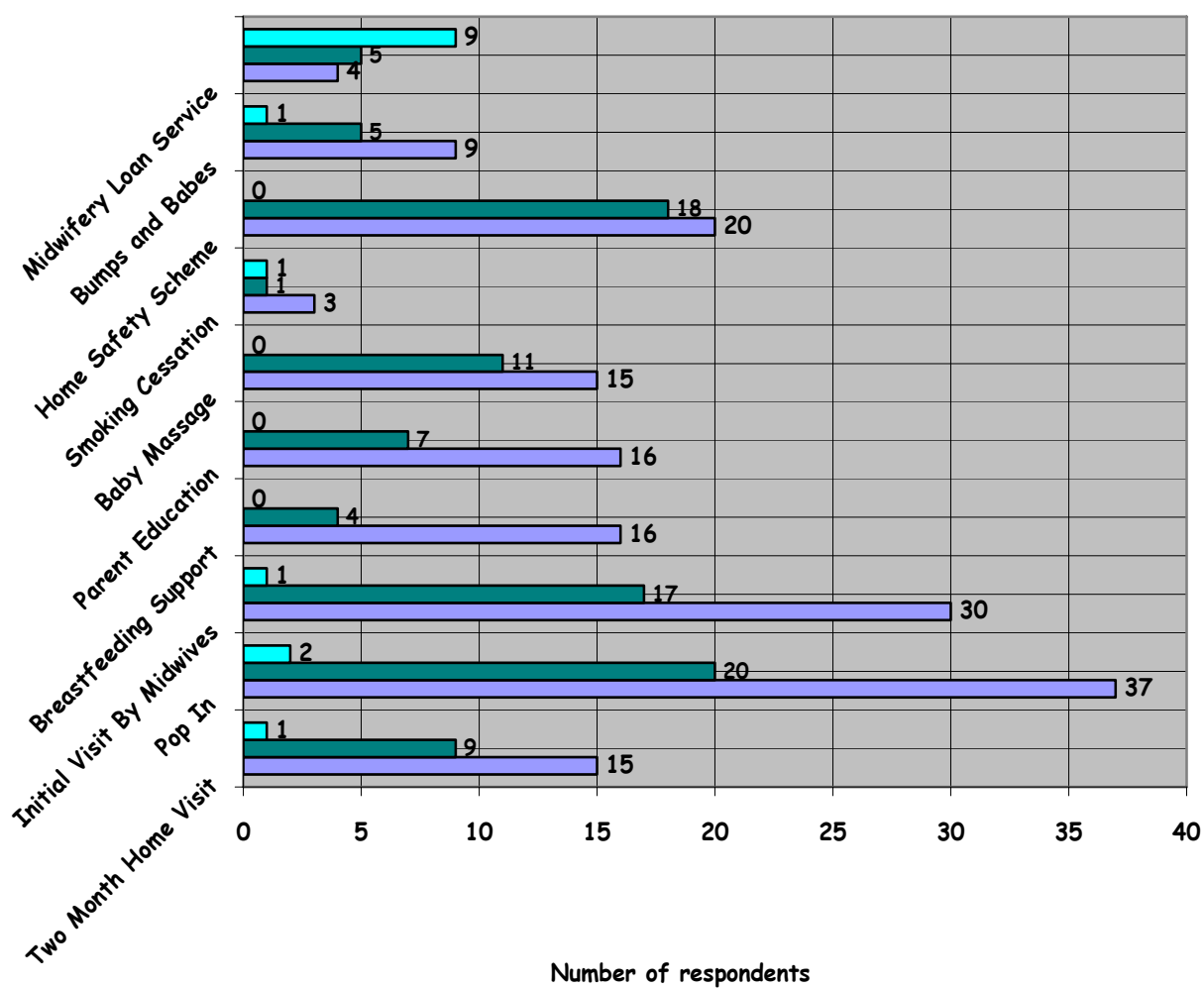


Figure 3.8.2 How helpful were health services?



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### 3.9 Other services

This section considers responses regarding both the use and helpfulness of other services provided by Sure Start Blaenau, the results of which are presented in Figures 3.9.1 and 3.9.2 overleaf. There were five services in this category.

- The services in this category which were used by the highest proportion of respondents were the Crèche and the Adult Learning Services. The former was used by 34% (37) of respondents, 76% (28) of whom had used the service more than once. The latter was used by 32% (34) of respondents, 79% (27) of whom had used the service on more than one occasion.
  - The Volunteer Service was used by the smallest proportion of respondents, with only 5% (5) having accessed this service. However, all those who had used this service had done so on more than one occasion.
  - The Volunteer Service was considered to be very helpful by all those who had used the service.
  - The Adult Learning Service and the Parents Group were also considered to be helpful by a large proportion of respondents, with 76% of those who had used these services reporting in both cases that these services had been 'very helpful'.
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Figure 3.9.1 Use of other services

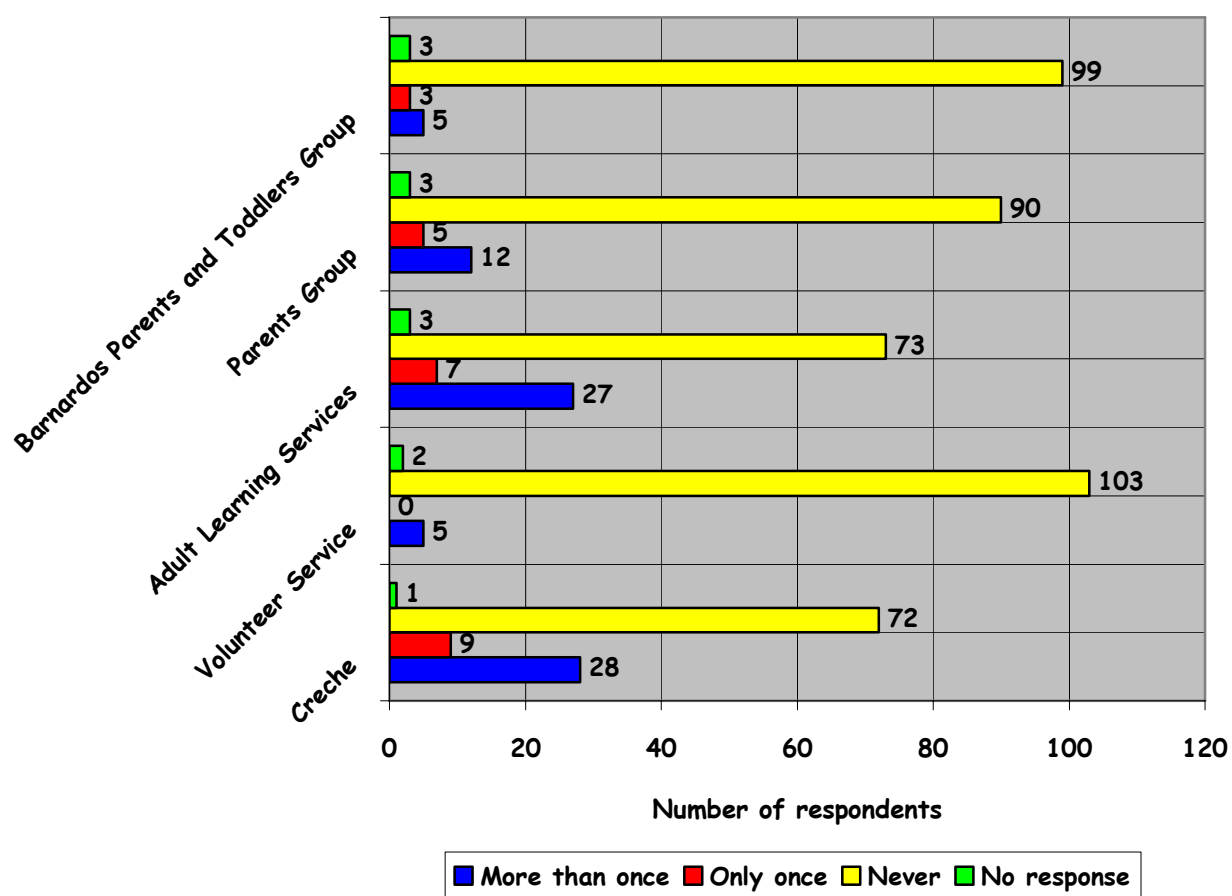
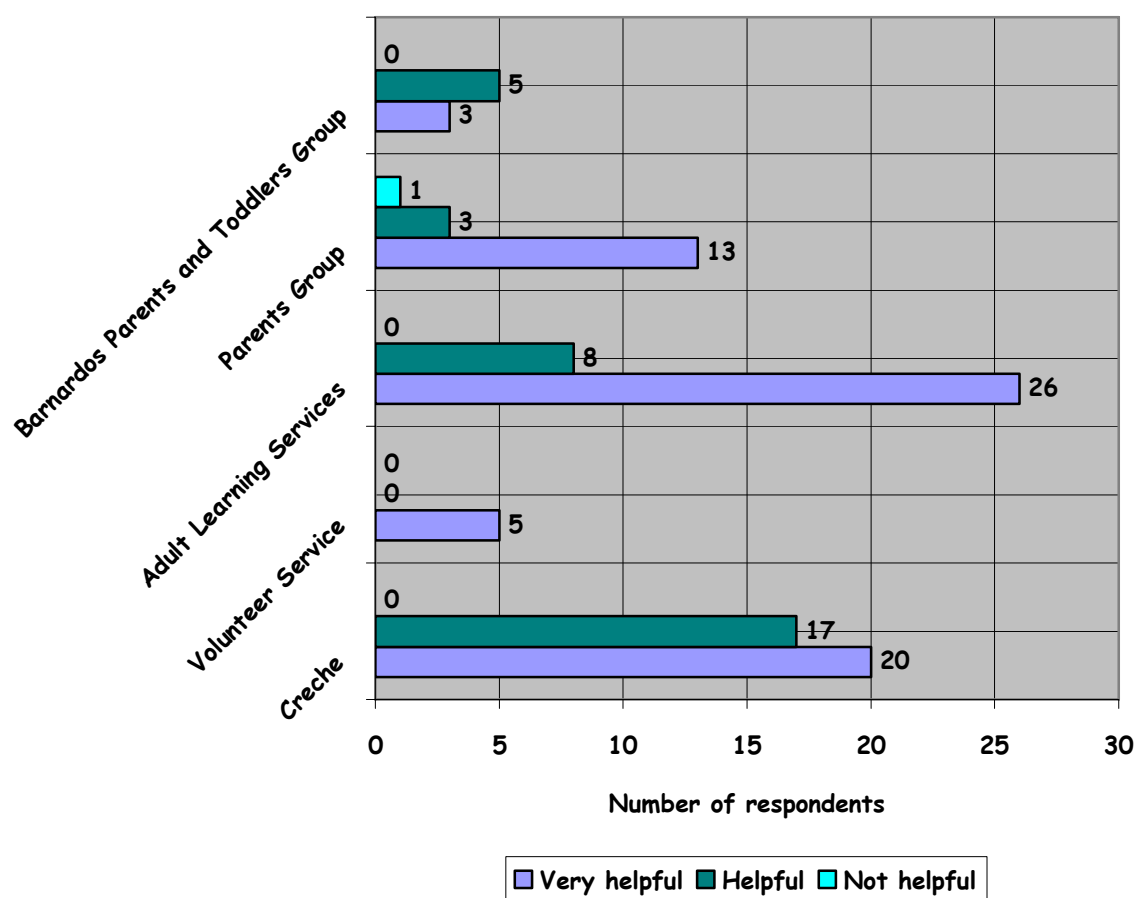


Figure 3.9.2 How helpful were other services?

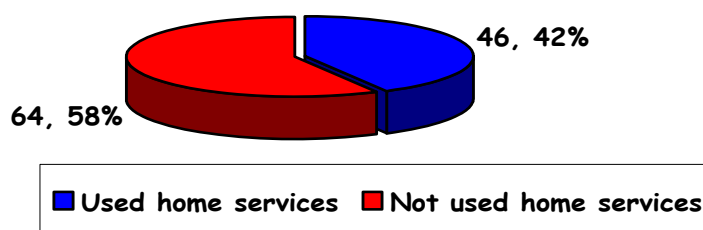


### 3.10 Use and helpfulness of Sure Start Blacon services used at home

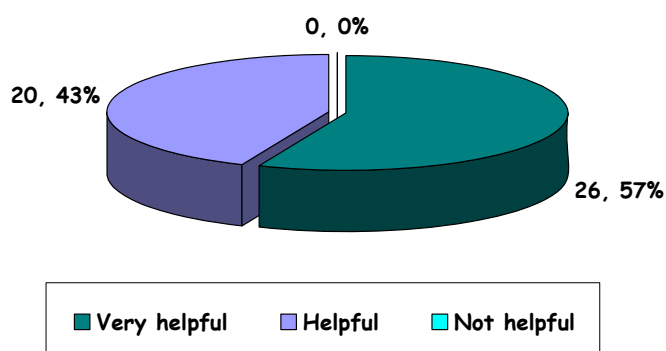
Figures 3.10.1 and 3.10.2 overleaf show the use of, and helpfulness of, Sure Start Blacon services used at home. Less than half (46, 42%) of respondents had used these services. Of those who had used these services, 57% (26) had found these to be 'very helpful', and none of the respondents considered these services not to have been helpful. All 110 respondents answered these questions.

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**Figure 3.10.1 Use of Sure Start Blacon home services**



**Figure 3.10.2 How helpful were Sure Start Blacon home services?**

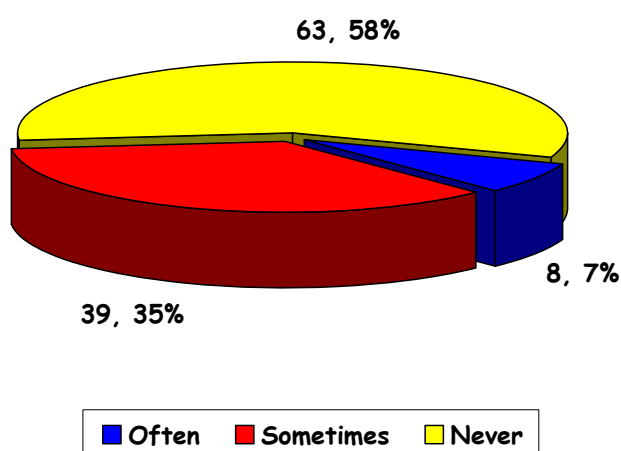


### **3.11 Service user-initiated contact by phone or drop in**

Figure 3.11.1 overleaf shows the rates of service user-initiated contact by phone or drop in, as reported by respondents. Sixty-three (58%) respondents had not initiated contact with Sure Start Blacon through either of these methods, and only 8 (7%) had done this often (although the method used is unknown).

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**Figure 3.11.1 Rates of service user-initiated contact by phone or drop in**



### **3.12 Further comments from respondents**

Over half (60, 55%) of respondents made further comments in the section provided in the questionnaire. A complete list of all the comments made can be found in Appendix 3.

Six key themes emerged from these comments:

- messages of thanks and praise for Sure Start Blacon services and staff (11 comments);
- comments regarding positive experiences of Sure Start Blacon services (23 comments);
- suggestions regarding future service delivery (13 comments);
- comments regarding the intentions of respondents to use Sure Start Blacon services in the future (2 comments);
- the need for more information about Sure Start Blacon services (7 comments);
- comments regarding negative experiences of Sure Start Blacon (4 comments).

The comments detailed below are illustrative of these six themes. Each comment is followed by a number, which is an anonymised respondent number.

#### **3.12.1 Messages of thanks and praise**

Eleven (18%) of those respondents who made comments used the additional space on the questionnaire to express sentiments of thanks and praise about services and staff.

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Three of these comments were regarding the Sure Start Blacon midwives. One respondent commented:

*"Excellent service provided by a caring and dedicated team. Help received from Sure Start Blacon midwives made a big difference to my life and my son's - thank you. (Midwife) in particular provided massive help and support when is was needed most - a real star!" (5).*

One of these comments related to the Home Visiting staff:

*"(Home visiting service staff) has been great - very supportive and caring. I had a lot of problems. I have recommended to friends and family to ask about Sure Start" (12).*

One comment related to the staff at Hatton Road Drop In:

*"I have found Hatton Road Family Centre and its staff fantastic" (41).*

The remaining six comments were more general words of thanks and praise for the services and the staff. One respondent stated:

*"Every member of staff has gone above and beyond their duty to help and support us - thank you Sure Start Blacon!" (19).*

### **3.12.2 Comments regarding positive experiences**

Twenty-three (38%) of the comments made by respondents were regarding positive experiences which they had had. Six of these were specific comments where respondents stated positive outcomes and achievements from attending Sure Start Blacon services. One respondent stated:

*"I have been given a lot of support from pregnancy up to now. Sure Start staff is like a family that I can count on all the time. Currently, they are helping me to reorganise my life by going for a degree course, which, for me, will take a lot of steps to get. Besides, I am sure I will use more of their services when my baby is older. Without their help it would be very difficult for me to get on - many thanks" (77).*

Seventeen of the comments were more general ones about the benefits of Sure Start and positive comments about the programme. One respondent stated:

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*"Very helpful to parents with very young children and also single parents" (88).*

### **3.12.3 Comments regarding future service delivery**

Thirteen (22%) of those who made additional comments, did so about areas of the service they would like to see developed, some making suggestions as to how this could be done, or services they would like to see offered by Blaenau Gwent Sure Start. Several comments were made about the Pop In, respondents stating that they would like to see this service open more often. One parent commented that she would like to see a bus service on offer for local parents, which went to a local supermarket. One respondent stated that there should be more play areas for children in Blaenau Gwent, whilst another suggested that Sure Start Blaenau Gwent offer a swimming club.

Several respondents suggested that the times of sessions should be changed. This was particularly the case for the Parent Education Service where evening sessions were requested. The issue of provision for older children was mentioned as something to be considered, particularly in relation to the toys provided in sessions. In addition to this, one parent suggested that the programme should arrange evening activities for local parents, and another requested the provision of nursery care. Finally, one respondent raised an issue about adult participation in groups run by Sure Start Blaenau Gwent, stating that this had been unclear and required clarifying in the future.

### **3.12.4 Comments regarding future intention to use Sure Start Blaenau Gwent services**

Two comments were made by respondents regarding their future intention to use Sure Start Blaenau Gwent services. These comments both gave reference to the age of the respondents' children, one commented:

*"As my baby is only one month old I haven't used most of the services provided by Sure Start but I am intending on using some once she gets older" (22).*

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### **3.12.5 Comments regarding the need for more information on Sure**

#### **Start Blaon services**

Seven respondents made comments regarding the need for more information regarding services operated in the area by Sure Start Blaon. The majority of these respondents stated that until they received the 2004 Satisfaction Survey questionnaire, they were not aware that Sure Start Blaon offered such a range of services. One respondent commented:

*"I didn't know that all of these services were available. Some of them would have been useful earlier in (child's) life. I thought that it was only the crèche and drop in you provided" (39).*

In a few cases, respondents had never heard of Sure Start before, and did not appear to be aware that there was a local Sure Start programme providing services. One respondent commented:

*"Before this survey I had never heard about 'Sure Start' because no one has ever been in touch or contacted me from your company" (31).*

### **3.12.6 Comments regarding negative experiences of Sure Start Blaon**

Four comments were received in this category. Two of these comments concerned access to Sure Start Blaon services, one relating to the timing of the sessions, and the other relating to the location of services. One respondent considered services to be impractical as most services operate in the mornings. This made it difficult for this respondent to attend, as she worked in the mornings. Another respondent, considered Sure Start Blaon services to be difficult to access, as they are located too far from her home.

In addition to issues of access, one respondent raised the issue of father involvement in Sure Start Blaon services, commenting that she considered this to be a low priority. It was commented:

*"Me and my partner feel that although it is supposed to be a family orientated scheme, there is not really that much for fathers, not just to do with the children and the family but with learning new skills etc. Also the things they do have are at rubbish times" (104).*

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The final comment in this category relates to one client who considered Sure Start Blacon to be too involved in her personal life, which appeared to have deterred her from engaging, it was commented:

*"Sure Start is too in my private life, that's why I am not with them anymore" (16).*

### **3.13 Comparisons with levels of knowledge, use and satisfaction with Sure Start Blacon services in 2003**

Despite the differences in methodology and survey design it is possible to draw some comparisons with the results from the 2003 survey.

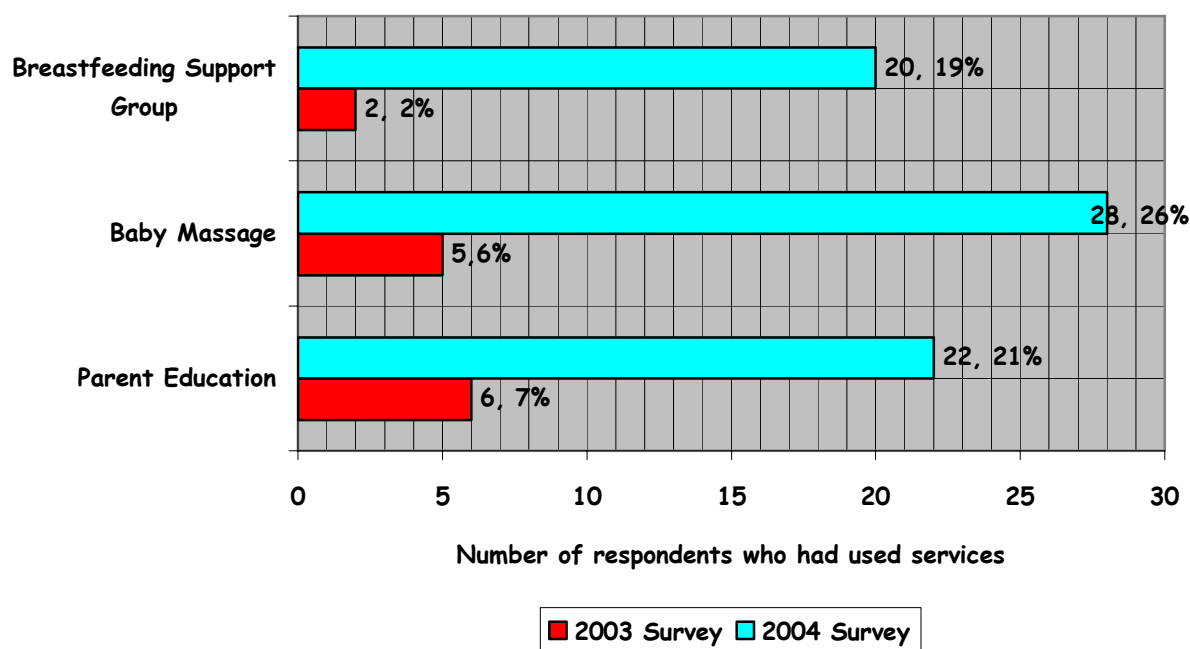
- 1) The characteristics of the respondents were not dissimilar, with 95% in 2003 being completed by a female, compared with 99% in 2004. 32% of respondents in 2003 were single parents, compared with 36% in 2004.
  - 2) There was a slight increase in the number of respondents with only one child living with them in 2004. This rose from 31% in 2003 to 44% in 2004. In addition to this the number of respondents with two children living with them fell from 40% in 2003 to 35% in 2004.
  - 3) In terms of the use of individual services, it is hard to draw many meaningful comparisons, as the list of services provided in 2004 differs considerably from those offered in 2003. Largely, this is due to an increase in the number of different services on offer to eligible families. However, it was possible to compare the use of Parent Education, Baby Massage and the Breastfeeding Support Group. In all these cases, considerably more respondents in 2004 had used the services than in 2003. Figure 3.13.1 overleaf displays these trends in engagement.
  - 4) Overall satisfaction with Sure Start Blacon services in 2004 differed considerably from 2003. The proportion of respondents who reported being 'very satisfied' overall with services rose from 28% in 2003, to 62% in 2004. In addition, the proportion of respondents who reported being 'dissatisfied' fell from 16% in 2003, to 3% in 2004. Figures for respondents who reported being 'very dissatisfied' were the same in both years (1%). Figure 3.13.2 overleaf shows trends in satisfaction with Sure Start Blacon services when 'satisfied' and 'very
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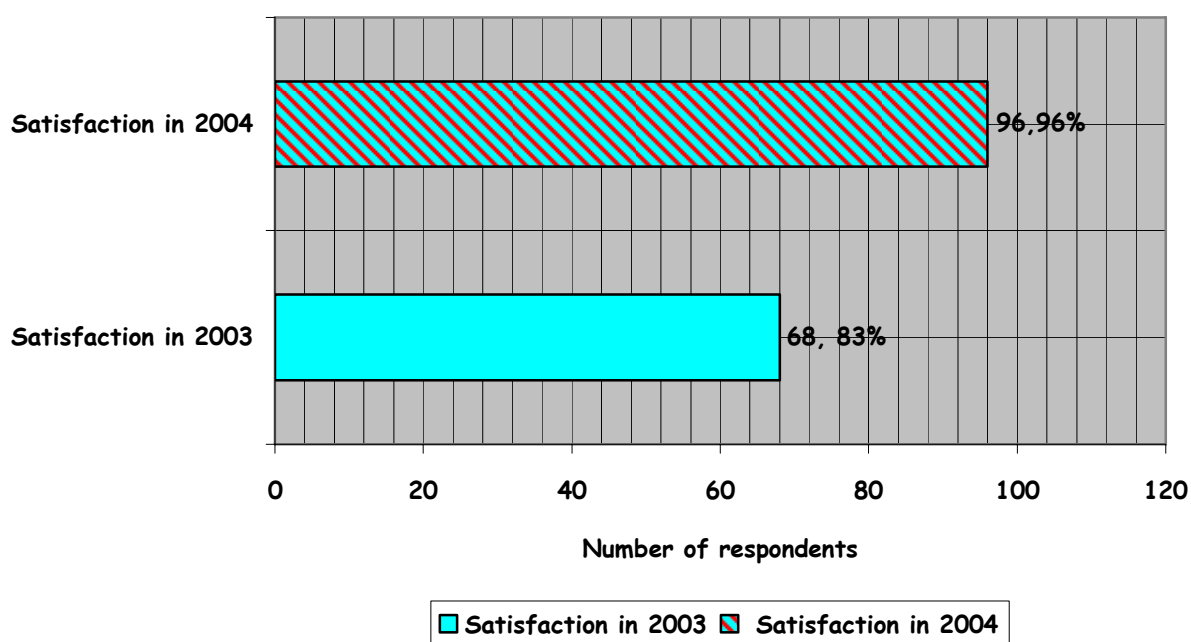
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satisfied' are grouped together. This clearly shows the rise in satisfaction amongst respondents since 2003.

**Figure 3.13.1 Trends in engagement**



**Figure 3.13.2 Trends in satisfaction with Sure Start Blacon Services**



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## **Chapter 4**

### **Discussion of results**

The 2004 Parent Satisfaction Survey provides an indication of the use of, and satisfaction with, services in Blacon (a complete list of service descriptions can be found in Appendix 4). Using the Child Health Database to obtain the addresses of all eligible families, ensured that those not registered (and who may not be accessing Sure Start services) were included in the study, as well as those families currently registered with Sure Start Blacon.

Due to the self-selected nature of the respondents, they cannot be taken as a representative sample of either the eligible population or the users of Sure Start Blacon services. Nevertheless, responses can be used to illuminate aspects of service usage that may help inform service delivery.

The survey indicates that the awareness of Sure Start Blacon is relatively high among respondents, with 97% (107) of respondents stating that they were conscious of a Sure Start programme in the area. However, 3% (3) of respondents were unaware of Sure Start Blacon, indicating that raising awareness of the local programme and specific services remains a key challenge. Although the majority of respondents were aware of the local programme, several commented on the lack of information they had received about services. This lack of knowledge, coupled with the development of the programme (changing service provision) and the mobility of families in the locality (moving in and out of the area), highlights the need for regular publicity regarding programme activity. Furthermore, 64% (70) of respondents ticked the box on the prize draw sheet requesting more information about Sure Start Blacon services, suggesting that local residents are keen to be kept up-to-date about local services for children under four and their families.

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The characteristics of respondents were consistent with those recorded in the 2003 survey, in that the majority were female and a significant proportion were single parents. This may indicate that the primary carers of children in Blacon are female and that many of these are single parents, although this should be interpreted with caution given the self-selected nature of the respondents. It also may indicate that the majority of Sure Start Blacon services are accessed by females, highlighting challenges which remain for the local programme in terms of engaging fathers/male carers. However, this should be considered alongside records of attendance at Sure Start Blacon services to determine the extent to which this is the case.

The age of the respondents may indicate that the majority of parents in the area are over the age of 26. However, given the low response rate (13%), this should be interpreted with caution, and may in fact be more of an indication of the age of those who use Sure Start Blacon services, and a reflection of those who are more likely to reply to surveys. It would be useful for the local programme to obtain data on the ages of parents in Blacon and compare this with those families who are registered to capture a sense of which age groups they are currently reaching and which they are not. This would in turn inform service development.

The number of respondents with only one child living with them was more than in 2003. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of respondents had more than one child living with them, and many of these were over the age of four. This is consistent with one comment which was made regarding the need for services for older children.

There were particular services which were accessed by a number of respondents on more than one occasion, these being Dee Point Drop In and the Pop In, which were both accessed by over 50% of respondents. Other services appear to have fairly low levels of service usage among respondents, highlighting the need for the local programme to look at new ways of engaging and retaining members of the eligible population. Few respondents reported using the Dads Group, however this is consistent with the gender

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of the respondents, and may indicate the need for promoting services amongst fathers/male carers in the area. The programme may wish to consider further ways of gauging father/male carer awareness and use of services to inform service development, as this survey has revealed very little about men's views of the local programme.

Of those services that have been accessed by respondents, the majority were considered to be helpful, suggesting that initial engagement with services is where the main barrier lies. The only exceptions to this concerned the Midwifery Loan Service, Stay and Play, and the Smoking Cessation service, which all received a number of counts of 'not helpful' by those who had used the service only once. This suggests that for these services the programme may want to consider retention and satisfaction of clients as a priority. With the exception of these named services, few clients reported that they found services 'not helpful', and several services, (Dee Point Drop In; the Pop In; the Breastfeeding Support service; Parent Education service; Initial Visit by Midwives; Stay and Play; the Volunteer Service; and Adult Learning Services) received high counts of 'very helpful'. The only service to score low in the 'very helpful' category and to receive a count in the 'not helpful' category was Hatton Road Drop In. It would be useful for the programme to look more closely into this to try and establish why results for this service are different from those for Dee Point Drop In. The largest number of negative responses were received regarding the Midwifery Loan Service, with 50% of respondents considering this service not to have been helpful. It would be useful to give further consideration to this issue by consulting with clients to establish why this has not been helpful to some.

With regard to client-initiated contact, very few respondents had done this often. This may be because clients are able to voice their concerns, ask questions and obtain information during sessions, and do not therefore consider it necessary to telephone or drop-in to talk to a member of the team. However, it may also be the case that some clients are not aware that they can access the team in this way. Therefore, it would be

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beneficial for the programme to make this clear to eligible families. Increased contact in this way may be regarded as a vehicle for empowering people and encouraging eligible families to access other Sure Start Blaenau services.

The proportion of respondents who reported being 'very satisfied' overall with services provided by Sure Start Blaenau increased from 2003 satisfaction rates. This might indicate that the programme is closer to providing a service which local people desire. Nevertheless, the low response rate makes it hard to conclude that the other 87% of the eligible population (who did not return questionnaires) are also satisfied. This also raises questions about why this proportion of people did not complete the questionnaire, despite the steps that were taken to encourage people to return questionnaires.

Of the 60 additional comments received from respondents 34 (57%) of these were positive responses, either about experiences people had had, or comments regarding specific services or staff. Respondents were particularly complimentary regarding the service offered by the Sure Start Blaenau midwives. Sure Start Blaenau services appear to have had a positive effect on a number of respondents, however, it is important not to regard this as 'large scale' success due to the small response rate. Rather, it is possible to assert that for those people who regularly use Sure Start Blaenau services, their experiences have been largely positive. In considering the data presented on all of the services, it is apparent that there were more respondents who have used the services more than once, than there were responses from those who had used the services on more than one occasion. With this in mind, it is possible therefore to assert that responses may have been provided by a self-selecting group of people who use services provided by Sure Start Blaenau and are satisfied with them, resulting in this survey being representative of this group of people and not the wider eligible population.

Several comments regarding ideas for future service delivery were made by respondents. These comments provide information that can be used by the local

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programme in considering future development. Such efforts may assist in developing services which local people desire, thereby increasing the degree to which Sure Start Blaenau services are 'user-led', which may in turn lead to higher levels of engagement. Within this, the timing of sessions remains a key area for consideration which has emerged from this survey. This appears to be central to the engagement of working parents/carers, and fathers in particular.

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## Chapter 5

### Recommendations

It is evident that for the majority of respondents who have used Sure Start Blacon services more than once, their experiences have been positive. Some services in particular appear to have had profound impacts on local residents. However, the low response rate to this survey may be indicative of the challenge that engaging the eligible population presents to the local programme. Therefore, most of the recommendations that follow are consistent with the issue of community engagement.

- 1) The programme may wish to consider new methods of communicating with local residents to ensure that all eligible families are aware of the local programme and the specific services on offer. Regular updates and information on forthcoming events could be included in this.
  - 2) The programme will need to review the times of sessions if more working parents/carers, in particular males, are to engage with Sure Start Blacon.
  - 3) The methods used to engage fathers/male carers at Sure Start Blacon could also be reviewed. A consultation exercise with male parents/carers and parents-to-be, to establish the type of approach which this client group would respond to may assist this process.
  - 4) Sure Start Blacon may wish to consider expanding the Dee Point Drop In and Pop In services, in order that the programme responds to users' needs. In addition to this, it may be useful to examine these services more closely to establish what makes them attractive to residents. This learning could then be shared across other services, in the hope of engaging more people in services.
  - 5) It would be useful for the programme to look closely at the Hatton Road Drop In, to try and determine if this service is poorly attended, in comparison with the Dee Point Drop In and, if so, why this may be the case.
  - 6) Community consultation could take place with regard to the Midwifery Loan Service. It may be possible for staff to ascertain why several clients who have
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used this service have not found it helpful, in order that the service can be re-shaped around service users' needs.

- 7) Given that the main barrier to the engagement of clients appears to lie in 'initial engagement', the programme may wish to re-consider how services are presented to clients, and other techniques of attracting local residents.
  - 8) It may be helpful for the programme to publicise the fact that the team are available for help and offer advice over the telephone, or by dropping in to the programme base. It is possible that this may ultimately lead to increased registrations.
  - 9) The programme may wish to engage in some informal community consultation to ascertain why 87% of the eligible population did not complete the questionnaire. This may assist in the future design and methodology of other satisfaction surveys.
  - 10) Regular community consultation may also assist the programme in producing services which local residents will value and make use of regularly. Services which are user-led are likely to be better attended.
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## **Appendix 1**

### **The questionnaire and prize draw entry leaflet**

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**Appendix 2**  
**Participant Information Sheet**

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## **Appendix 3**

### **Complete list of respondent comments**

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## **Appendix 4**

### **Service descriptions**