Cumbria Sure Start
Children’s Centre
User Satisfaction Survey
1. Introduction

In August 2011 a county wide survey was carried out to explore the general levels of satisfaction with Cumbria Sure Start Children’s Centres. This report gives an overview of the findings. All results reported within this report are at county level. Data is not available at footprint level as many of the results may not be statistically significant at this level.

1.1. About the Survey

The survey field was carried out using two complementary approaches. Firstly, a text broadcast was sent to all parents/carers registered on the eStart system with a valid mobile number. This message invited users to click a link, visit a web page and complete the survey. Secondly, hard copy surveys were sent to every Sure Start Children’s Centre for distribution to service users throughout the survey fieldwork period. Surveys were completed and returned to centres and collected securely by Children’s Services staff.

Fieldwork was completed between 3rd August and 24th August. In total, we received 383 completed surveys. 58 surveys were returned via the web link, with the remaining 325 being completed using hard copy surveys available in centres. Response rates are satisfactory, particularly taking into account that no prize incentive was offered.

2. The Findings

2.1. Respondent Profile

Respondents were asked to indicate how many children they had, and the ages of those children. Three options were available, and respondents could tick all that applied. The table below summarises the responses given.

Q1. About your children...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am expecting a child</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have one or more children aged 5 or under</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have one or more children aged 5 - 14</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response levels are too low to report on a footprint by footprint basis. However, it is possible to look at response rates at children’s services district level. There are three Children’s Services districts – Allerdale & Copeland, Barrow & South Lakeland and Carlisle & Eden. The number of responses1 from each district is 161 (Allerdale & Copeland), 120 (Barrow & South Lakeland), and 56 (Carlisle & Eden). A further 46 respondents indicated that they were not currently using the Sure Start Children's Centres and have therefore been excluded from CS district level analysis.

1 Respondents are classified into CS districts according to which Sure Start Children’s Centre they have indicated that they usually attend.
2.2. Sure Start Children’s Centre Non-Users

46 respondents indicated that they had not used a Sure Start Children’s Centre in the past 12 months. These respondents were asked to indicate the reason(s) for this. The graph below illustrates the findings. Please note that respondents were asked to tick all that applied, therefore percentages will not sum to 100%. The graph shows that the main reason given by respondents is because they have not received any info (34.8%). Other common reasons include respondents no longer requiring the services on offer (28.3%) and that they work full time (23.9%). 8.7% of respondents indicate that inconvenient session times are among the reasons they do not attend. Encouragingly, there are no respondents who indicate that they do not feel welcome at the centre, and a very small proportion (2.2%) indicate that they have either had a bad experience or cannot access the centre/services because of a disability.

Q5. Why have you not attended a Sure Start Children’s Centre in the last 12 months? (Tick all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage of Non-Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't need any of the services on offer</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems accessing due to disability</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Reasons</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Difficulties</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not received any info</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work full time</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems accessing due to disability</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient session times</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not feel welcome at the centre</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of childcare for other children</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous bad experience</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Dissatisfied</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3. Satisfaction with Sure Start Children’s Centres

All respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were overall with the Sure Start Children’s Centre that they usually use. The table below shows the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11. Overall, how satisfied are you with your Sure Start Children’s Centre</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Satisfied</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Dissatisfied</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the 366 who responded, 266 (72.7%) have indicated that they are very satisfied with their Sure Start Children’s Centre. A further 82 (22.4%) indicated that they are satisfied. Taking these two responses together, over 95% of users are satisfied. A very small proportion of users are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (2%).

In addition to overall satisfaction, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements. The graphs below show the results for each statement.
The graphs reveal that satisfaction with all aspects of Sure Start Children’s Centres is high. In particular, high levels of satisfaction are evident for how easy it is to access activities and groups, with almost 90% either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement. Another statement with which a very high proportion of respondents agree is ‘The centre provides a place to meet other parents and carers’, with 89.3% either strongly agreeing or agreeing.

None of the statements have a particularly notable number of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with them, although ‘Activities and groups are at convenient times’ has the biggest proportion for any of the statements with 4.2%.

2.4. Outcomes for Children

Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements regarding outcomes for their children. The graph below shows the results.

The results for Cumbria are very positive. Very high proportions of respondents either strongly agree or agree with the statements as a result of their children having accessed local Sure Start Children Centre activities. In particular, high levels of agreement are evident for ‘Given my child the chance to learn new things’ (84.1%) and ‘Given my child the chance to socialise/make new friends’ (85.1%). The statement that attracts the least proportion of agreement is ‘Given my child the chance to have a healthier lifestyle’ with only 64.5% agreeing (to any extent) with this statement.
2.5. Outcomes for Parents and Carers

Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements regarding outcomes for themselves. The graphs overleaf show the results. Again, the results are really encouraging. The two statements that respondents appear to agree with the most are ‘Given me the opportunity to meet other parents and carers’ (88.3% agreeing to some extent) and ‘Given me the chance to socialise/make new friends’ (86.9% agreeing to some extent). Another statement that parents/carers have agreed relatively strongly with is ‘Helped me understand my child’s learning’ with 76.2% of respondents agreeing to some extent.
Interestingly, the statement that has attracted the least agreement is ‘Helped me with training/employment’ – with just over a third of respondents agreeing. Two statements sought to explore the extent to which Sure Start Children’s Centres impacted upon aspirations. Again, the results for both were very positive. Approximately 7 out of 10 respondents indicated that accessing Sure Start Children’s Centre services has made them feel better about themselves and 56.9% of respondents have expressed some level of agreement that centre use has encouraged them to set new goals.

2.6. What do parents/carer’s really think?

The survey gave respondents the opportunity to share their thoughts by providing two free text questions exploring the best and the worst things about Sure Start Children’s Centres. In addition to recording the free text, comments have been categorised to give a broad indication of the nature of the commentary. This section presents the categorisation and a selection of verbatim comments.

The graphs shown below and overleaf give a breakdown of the responses by categories for the best thing about Sure Start Children’s Centre’s. In total, 298 respondents chose to write a response for this question.

It can be seen that the top three categories are socialising, supportive staff and activities.
A selection of comments can be seen below:

- The fact it is easy access, regularly available and the staff are wonderful.
- To give the children a chance to experience new things. Helps them with their social skills and gives them things to do that doesn’t cost money.
- It gives my child a chance to meet other children his own age.
- The opportunity to meet other parents and to learn about ways to interact with my baby.
- It’s a good opportunity for my child to mix and play with other children in a safe environment.
- Preparing my child for school and giving her the opportunity to socialise with children her own age.
- Lovely staff and great activities.
- The staff are extremely friendly, helpful and very welcoming, and have taken the time to get to know me and my child, and can relate to us both.
- The staff! They are all amazing with the activities they have created. All are very friendly and supportive. If I didn’t work, I would be here every week.
A selection of comments can be seen below:

‘The fact it is easy access, regularly available and the staff are wonderful’

‘To give the children a chance to experience new things. Helps them with there social skills and gives them things to do that doesn’t cost money.’

‘It gives my child a chance to meet other children his own age.’

‘The opportunity to meet other parents and to learn about ways to interact with my baby.’

‘It’s a good opportunity for my child to mix and play with other children in a safe environment.’

‘Preparing my child for school and giving her the opportunity to socialise with children her own age.’

‘Lovely staff and great activities.’

‘The staff are extremely friendly, helpful and very welcoming, and have taken the time to get to know me and my child, and can relate to us both.’

‘The staff! They are all amazing with the activities they have created. All are very friendly and supportive. If I didn’t work, I would be here every week.’

‘Friendly and helpful staff. A great place to socialise and meet other mums, babies and children.’

‘The staff and health visitors are really polite, caring and helpful.’

‘Well organised, friendly and competent staff.’

‘The childcare is of a very high standard. My children have loved their time there. The staff are very experienced, helpful and knowledgeable.’

‘Meeting other parents. Reassuring me. Given me confidence.’

‘I have found myself at a real low if (staff) hadn’t supported me I would have given up on my son. Thank You XXX.’

‘Makes my child feel welcome and safe.’

‘Messy play - gives the children a chance to play with stuff they don’t do at home!!’

‘The variety of activities put on for children and the support given by the staff.’

‘The range of courses and activities they offer. Safe and calm environment for the children to play.’

‘I learnt a lot when my child was growing up and using the toddler groups and the little 2’s. As did my child. Sure Start has been brilliant. Also provides cheap affordable summer trips we go on each year’

‘Breast feeding support.’

‘Being able to keep active during pregnancy, and also find out information from the midwives that run the classes about any concerns I may have.’

‘Family learning and days out.’

‘It encourages people to be themselves and gives you confidence to learn.’

‘It’s close, they care and I know that if I have any worries they are at the other end of the phone and would do what they can to help or get information for me.’

‘Lots of support if needed. Staff are brilliant. I know my grandchild is safe and well looked after when dropped off at pre school.’

‘It was a life line for me when my children were grown up as my son has ADHD and I felt alone. Sure Start helped me to see I wasn’t alone and help my other child get some time away from the family home to meet new friends.’

‘Support for new parents - meeting other mums. Not feeling alone.’

‘Ability to ask questions and get really useful and practical answers. Meeting new people with babies of same age. Baby club - brilliant!’

‘Different play opportunities. Free! Supportive Staff’

‘The classes on offer and that they are free-I couldn’t afford to do them if I had to pay and my baby would really lose out.’

‘Children having the opportunity to learn through play.’

‘The activities they put on for kids with additional needs.’
The graph shown below gives a breakdown of the responses by categories for the worst thing about Sure Start Children’s Centres.

There were a total of 137 who wrote comments for this question. It should be noted that 235 people either left the text space blank or wrote in that there was nothing negative they could write.

It can be seen that the top three categories that respondents have commented on are cuts in services, activities and opening times. However it should be noted that many of the comments were diverse and were unable to be classified, resulting in 26 comments being included in the other category.
A selection of comments can be seen below:

‘Not open enough - would like to see more groups on.’

‘Should have groups are at different times of day and be open more days. E.g. Only 1 baby group once a week, at certain time. Should be more on so you don’t miss out if that day/time is inconvenient for you.’

‘Full time worker has limited hours to attend.’

‘Not enough regular newsletter information used to be posted out in the past.’

‘More options on weekends would be a good idea for other parents to attend.’

‘More info about sessions in advance would be good.’

‘I was completely unaware of the centres until my health visitor enrolled me on a course. Good job!’

‘A lack of sufficient funding.’

‘A lot of staff have been paid off and sessions have been cancelled.’

‘Their funding being taken away.’

‘Recently there has been a lot of cut back and a lot of groups have been stopped.’

‘The staff are being pushed to do less and less because of the time and funds are reduced.’

‘The cuts that have been made to services due to funding cuts.’

‘It’s stopped the drop ins and activities as they don’t have the funding any more. It will and is being greatly missed in our community.’

‘Very angry about the services that are being cut.’

‘That they might be closing down due to spending cuts. The services might be means tested.’

‘Lack of tea and cake. Everything else fab!’

‘Should do more sessions for young babies / toddlers’

‘Not enough groups, one a week is not enough.’

‘I think there should be more activities for children that do not have additional needs and swim sessions for “parents” not just “dads” as it singles you out if you are a single parent therefore our children miss out’

‘Not offering a range of support for older children’

‘Not enough information on how to get help for children with behavioural problems.’

‘It gets really busy some days and not another room for adults and children.’

‘Trying to get hold of some members of staff (but only because they are so busy!)’

‘Filling in forms’

‘Like to see more for older children.’

‘I had to go looking for information about the centre and classes etc. It would be a help if your health visitor could give you some info to get started.’

‘The activities they put on for kids with additional needs.’

‘Nearby, Affordable, Welcoming, Timely activities.’

‘Helping children with special needs.’
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