

# Mapping Sure Start Scotland



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## MAPPING SURE START SCOTLAND

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## Introduction

This summary report maps the development of services funded through Sure Start Scotland based on information provided by local authorities. The mapping exercise was carried out by a team at the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) commissioned by the Scottish Executive.

The report outlines the characteristics of Sure Start Scotland provision in Scotland that have emerged from the mapping exercise and identifies some key issues arising from the research. This includes describing services developed under Sure Start Scotland, a discussion of partnership issues, consideration of data about service use, and looking at factors identified by authorities as having helped or hindered the development of Sure Start Scotland programmes. It illustrates the issues with examples of Sure Start Scotland funded services taken from across Scotland. It should be noted that these examples are not exhaustive and do not imply that the authorities quoted are the only ones providing each type of service.

This process revealed that Sure Start Scotland is seen as a major impetus for change, has led to new and improved services and has altered the focus of work with young children in most authorities. It also revealed a complex and dynamic picture of service development and service use across Scotland, with the programme being developed to suit local circumstances in each local authority area.

*This document and the full report of the Mapping exercise are available on the Scottish Executive website - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/edru/>.*

## Background

Sure Start Scotland is part of a broader programme of action to promote social inclusion ‘through a positive start in young children’s lives’. Starting in 1999, the programme has four broad objectives:

- To improve children’s social and emotional development.
- To improve children’s health.
- To improve children’s ability to learn.
- To strengthen families and communities.

Sure Start Scotland is focused on ‘integrated support, on directing support to more deprived groups in a non-stigmatising way and on meeting needs identified by parents’. Indeed, provision should encourage parental involvement as well as joint working and co-operation across sectors.

Sure Start Scotland embraces a range of working methods, delivery models and types of services; it has developed differently across local authorities for a range of reasons. Such diversity challenged the process of mapping and describing services. However, finding out about service provision across Scotland is important for sharing ideas and good practice, and for identifying common issues of concern.

## The Mapping Exercise

### Aim

The overall aim of the project was to identify services for young children aged 0-3 and their families, which have been developed as a result of Sure Start Scotland funding, and describe the way Sure Start Scotland has impacted on existing provision.

In order to carry out the mapping exercise the following methods were used:

- Analysis of data from local authority returns to the Scottish Executive on Sure Start Scotland planning and service provision.
- Telephone interviews with an officer in each local authority in Scotland.
- Obtaining updated information on services, users and spend in each local authority.
- Telephone interviews with 16 service providers from voluntary or statutory agencies.

## Mapping Sure Start Scotland — the Development of Services

Nearly all local authorities had used Sure Start Scotland resources together with associated funding to develop a package of several types of support for parents and children under four. For the very few remaining local authorities, such developments were still in the early stages. Since flexibility and diversity are inherent in the aims of Sure Start Scotland, it is quite difficult to capture the range of provision. For the purposes of this study, provision has been categorised as integrated or specialist, and resource based or intensive.

### Integrated Services

- The dominant form of provision developed by nearly all (30) local authorities is joint-agency integrated service provision combining childcare with a number of forms of support to children, parents and families, aiming to meet many or all of the Sure Start Scotland objectives through an integrated service.
- Integrated services are regarded by many as offering the potential for best practice: they combine team working, provide ‘joined up’ services, and enable the parent and child to experience ‘one-contact-provides-access-to-all’.
- The extent to which integrated services have been developed in different local authorities depends partly on their previous histories, for example the level of centre-based provision and inter-agency and partnership working before Sure Start Scotland was a key influence.

- Integrated services were mostly provided through new or extended children's centres. Twenty-nine of the 32 authorities have at least one centre, and for 24 of these, centres were the main way of clustering integrated services. However, 6 authorities put more emphasis on mobile support workers and services as a way of achieving integrated provision.

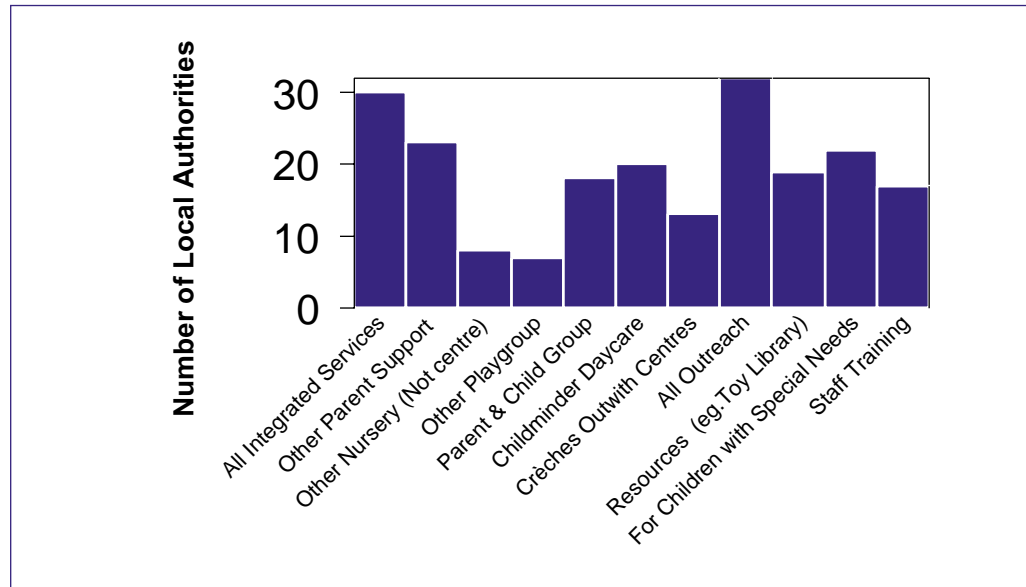
*Centre-based provision typically involves staff from education, social work and health, and sometimes voluntary sector agencies as well. These enhanced centres typically include crèche and/or nursery facilities where children can be left, enabling parents to access other services or training. Many also have playgroups and parent and toddler groups as well as a range of support services to parents, group and individual, formal and informal.*

*Glasgow City has built on existing extensive centre-based provision and created new centres in specific locations. All such centres have been resourced so that they can adopt the status of family or children's centres from which a myriad of work takes place. The work is multi-disciplinary and seeks to address the needs of the local community. This includes centre-based provision of day-care, intensive individual and family work, parents' groups and training, community development and work with volunteers. Outreach work is also provided to individuals and families to support and develop play and toddler groups and through partnership with Home-Start or other volunteer befriending schemes. Capacity building in terms of staff and volunteer training, and building on community resources more generally, has been central to this approach.*

*In the absence of family centre provision in the mixed rural and urban area of East Ayrshire, a Family Day-Care Project has been funded entirely from Sure Start Scotland. The project recruits and trains registered childminders to become day-carers who provide families identified as the most vulnerable with appropriate placements for their needs. The service focuses on improving the child's development and supporting the needs of parents who are enabled, for instance, to attend counselling sessions. Much of the work is preventive in nature but crisis placements have also supported families in numerous problematic situations, such as when a mother has been unexpectedly admitted to hospital with mental health problems or been remanded in custody. As a result of the project, all children identified as being the most vulnerable according to the authority's criteria now have some form of day-care.*

As illustrated in the table below, almost all local authorities have developed integrated services, and all provided some outreach work.

Figure 1: Services funded by Sure Start Scotland



### Outreach Services

- Outreach work typically involves intensive work with families with young children in their own homes, but can also include peripatetic support given to community based groups.
- Outreach work often complements centre based work, but exists in all local authorities.
- Many local authorities have partnership arrangements with voluntary sector organisations to provide outreach work.
- Home-Start provides outreach services in many local authority areas and has expanded its provision as a result of Sure Start Scotland funding – from 18 to 31 schemes. Home-Start trains and organises volunteers to provide a befriending home-visiting service to families with at least one child under five.

*Home visiting aims to identify difficulties, help families access resources and enable change through raising self-esteem, self confidence and parenting skills by activities including home based play and counselling sessions. It is provided through voluntary sector and statutory services.*

### Parent Support Services

- Twenty-three local authorities have used Sure Start Scotland to develop a range of specific parent support projects outwith centre based provision.

- Parent support is also part of integrated centre based provision; all local authorities are therefore providing some kind of parent support.
- There are several examples of innovative parent support projects across Scotland.

*In the City of Edinburgh, the range of parenting work outside of family centres includes 'Second Chance to Learn' courses in childcare work supported by crèche facilities, speech and language therapy groups for parents, free-standing fathers' groups, a parenting project for parents with learning difficulties, an ethnic minority parenting project and a support project for post-natal depression. In Angus, an art project was piloted to help parents identify ways of using art work with their children and to address mental well being.*

*The 'Fit Ayrshire Babies' project operates across the three local authorities that comprise Ayrshire, and bridges integrated services and free-standing projects. It is partially delivered from family centres and involves: (i) a package of training for workers and (ii) support to parents/carers, encouraging them to engage in and be aware of the benefits and importance of physical exercise for very young children. It also aims to enhance parenting skills and wider social and emotional development. It provides an example of effective collaborative working by linking with the health sector.*

### Nurseries, Cr ches, Playgroups and Parent and Children Groups

- This is a growing area in many local authorities and an important component of strategies to strengthen communities as well as supporting families with young children, and it is provided both within and outwith centre-based integrated services.
- Thirteen local authorities are funding crèche provision in addition to, or in the absence of, centre-based provision.
- Greater support for crèche workers and provision of resources is also being provided as a result of Sure Start Scotland funding in some areas.
- Supporting parents while they are interacting with their children encourages them to be involved in their children's development; 7 authorities have used Sure Start Scotland funding for specific projects with the Scottish Pre-School Play Association, in addition to existing partnerships.

*In the Scottish Borders' 'Play and Stay' programme, parents review issues in sessions while their children are in a crèche, then play with their children. In Dumfries and Galloway, peripatetic play workers are part of a package of outreach services.*



### Childminding

- Over half of local authorities have used Sure Start Scotland funding as an opportunity to stimulate the provision and quality of childminding within their areas.
- Many local authorities work in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association to standardise training and recruitment of childminders, and much of this funding comes from other local authority sources.
- Some local authorities have made the training of childminders a high priority and have used Sure Start Scotland funding to develop a childminding network to provide care for very young children from vulnerable families.
- Other forms of staff training are also a feature of some local authorities' approach to Sure Start Scotland.

### Play and Educational Resources

- In over half of local authorities, a range of play and early educational resources has been developed within Sure Start Scotland.
- Resources are used to support group and intensive work, on an outreach as well as centre based level, and aim to improve the quality of care in and outside the home, and support the wider social and educational development of children.
- Resources support community-based groups, such as parent and toddler groups and mobile crèches, childminders and sometimes go directly to families with young children (for example 'play at home').
- The provision of books for very young children was often prioritised through schemes like 'Bookstart' or similar programmes such as Kickstart for Kids in West Lothian.
- Toy libraries and play equipment, especially for very young children (soft play), have also been supported.
- Other provision includes the Shetland 'Play Bus' and a Special Needs Play Equipment Lending Resource in South Lanarkshire.

*The East Dunbartonshire Libraries Project aims to encourage young children into libraries with their parent or carer. The approach is a combination of universal provision and targeting through specific promotion in libraries in disadvantaged areas. There are four main strands to this development: story sacks are provided for pre-school groups along with support from library staff; family reading areas within libraries have been developed with more appropriate and comfortable seating; a 'look at a book' scheme encourages parents/carers to bring their very young children into a library to look at a book. This was supported by a reward scheme for repeated visits – so far 68 people have received the small reward token; and lastly there are 'baby bounce' sessions with library staff leading rhymes and clapping songs in libraries with an associated booklet.*

### Children with Special Needs/Disability

- In many local authorities, Sure Start Scotland resources support specific services for children with special needs who are under 4, and their parents.

*In Aberdeen, services for children with special needs include a specialist crèche, childcare workers who can provide respite care in families' own homes and a telephone support service.*

*In Edinburgh, provision includes a playgroup for deaf children, an early years autism project (also provided in other areas), home-based and small group support through Capability Scotland and adapted toys for children with special needs.*

### Other Specifically Targeted Groups

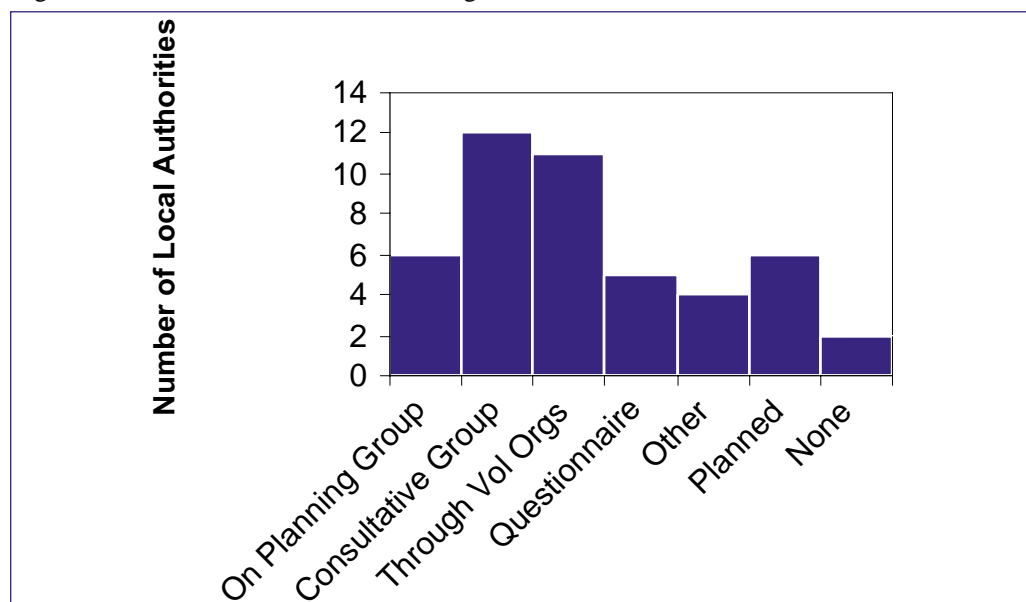
- Several local authorities have developed specialist services for other specific groups, for example:
  - families with young children affected by drug abuse;
  - families affected by mental health problems;
  - young parents;
  - traveller populations;
  - minority ethnic groups and asylum seekers.
- These provisions were described as attempts to reach the most vulnerable and/or marginalised, and also to provide culturally sensitive services.

- Many contact officers noted that much more could and should be done to access 'hard to reach' groups, thus extending the scope of Sure Start Scotland within the context of developing wider provision.

### Engagement with Parents

- Many local authorities are seeking to engage directly with parents in order both to elicit their views and to involve them in the services to be provided. However, further research would be required to assess the extent to which this is effective (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Parental Involvement in Planning



- In a small number of authorities such engagement was at a very early stage of development.
- The nature of some of the provision means that parents are engaged in services through assisting in their children's development and by participating in joint activities and sessions.
- Parents are also being supported through other developments aimed at improving skills and promoting self-esteem.
- A combination of informal interaction, as well as programmes for groups, is often being developed, especially within new or expanded centres.

*The Parents Participation Project being proposed for development in the rural authority of Dumfries and Galloway provides an example of ways that Sure Start Scotland has encouraged innovation in partnership working with parents to give them a more active voice in the planning of services. Local volunteers, many of whom will be parents, will be recruited and trained as Buddies' to support parents to take part in democratic structures and planning processes. Local volunteer child-carers will be engaged to run an appointment and respite crèche in order to support the work of this project. This also provides an example of parents being involved in service delivery.*

## Partnerships and Working with the Voluntary Sector

Many local authorities were working with the voluntary sector to develop services. Interviewees reported many success stories about cross-sector and inter-agency working with respect to the delivery of services.

*The 'Jeely Piece Club', a small voluntary organisation, was started by local people in Glasgow as a play scheme and has expanded to include crèche facilities, parent and toddler groups, involvement in parenting programmes and outreach work while retaining the strong involvement of local parents. Funding is provided through Sure Start Scotland along with other sources. The project is attached to a family learning centre, jointly works with the health visitor based there and has close working links with social work, including referral meetings. Referrals are passed between the club and other agencies. The club is able to work with some families that social work cannot reach, as it is reported as being non-stigmatising.*

*CLASP is an outreach service in the Falkirk local authority area that works with families who are not involved with statutory services, but are identified as needing additional support because of concerns about a child's development, parenting skills or family illness, stress, social need or isolation. Parents work with the outreach worker to identify issues and how they may be addressed. The success of the project is due to inter-agency working as the overwhelming majority of referrals are through health visitors, social work and children's centres.*

There were fewer accounts from local authority officers and voluntary organisations of the effective joint planning of services, even where agencies had a considerable history of working alongside each other in the same local authority area. Those interviewed suggested that involvement of voluntary organisations in the planning of services delivered under Sure Start Scotland was low, although there were some examples of good partnership planning and working.

Reorganisation of local government was reported by authorities to have impacted on partnership working at a planning level in a variety of ways:

- Relationships with partners before and after local authority reorganisation are different in each authority, with some continuing to work with the same partners as before - often with long standing approaches to integration - while others may still be in the process of establishing new relationships.
- In some areas the boundaries with health services have become more complex. Where health structures have remained centred on the cities, partnership working can be more difficult for the local authorities surrounding the cities that need to develop their own separate relationships with health at a planning level.
- Where more than one Health Board is operating in a local authority's area partnership negotiations may be complex.
- From the interview data, it is reported that the health sector has been harder to engage in many authorities, and several local authority officers interviewed said that they would like to enhance work with health, particularly at a planning level.

## Measuring Progress

An estimate of the numbers of parents and children supported by Sure Start Scotland has been aggregated from the information provided by each authority. These figures cover a wide range of provision which will vary in intensity - from one-off interventions, to sustained support over a long period of time, according to the needs of the child and family. For various reasons, these figures are likely to be conservative, as not all authorities could provide figures on all services. The figures for play and educational resource services are also likely to be an undercount, as figures for some services providing one-off resources, such as book packs, are not easily available. The assumptions used in the preparation of these estimates are set out in Appendix 1.

Figure 3: Additional children and parents supported since the introduction of Sure Start Scotland services (excluding play and educational resource based provision)

### Overall total of extra children and parents supported

1999/2000		2000/2001	
Children	Parents	Children	Parents
3387	3100	6556	6381

Figure 4: Additional children supported by play and educational resource based provision since the introduction of Sure Start Scotland services

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Overall total of extra children supported

1999/2000	2000/2001
5768	8864

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### Impacts beyond Numbers

Many of those interviewed noted that Sure Start Scotland has not only had the effect of increasing the amount and the range of service provision to families and children, but that it has also resulted in a number of other important benefits not reflected by ‘counting heads’:

- Capacity building in terms of investment in staff training and development and the building of new and extended premises.
- Improvements in the skills-base of staff may not have resulted in additional places for children, but has improved the quality of provision.
- Adapting or extending some centre-based provision may not necessarily have increased the number of young children attending the centres but is likely to have improved the children’s environment and the quality of their daily experience, thus improving their social and emotional development, their health and their ability to learn.
- The rolling out of Sure Start Scotland impacts on other provision in other ways. Improved staffing ratios mean more preventive and developmental work can be done; more time can be spent with families, building relationships and targeting those hardest to reach.

*An example of the complex impact of Sure Start Scotland was described by one contact officer with reference to a family centre located in a Social Inclusion Partnership area of one large urban authority. A mother with several problems, including suffering from depression, was initially given intensive, one-to-one support by the centre. Having made progress through the support given, she became involved with various groups and training courses and now, as a consequence of the change in her health and self-esteem, has felt able to take up full-time employment for the first time. She will continue to receive a service from this centre to help sustain the changes in her life, as an aim of the centre, like many others, is to support and promote such change over the long-term.*

## Service Providers Views of the Aims, Impact and Future of Sure Start Scotland

All of the service providers interviewed were very enthusiastic about Sure Start Scotland and the objectives it embraces, with one interviewee going as far as to say, 'Sure Start Scotland is one of the best things that the Scottish Executive has come up with'. Both the overall approach expressed in the aims and objectives and the availability of new money were particularly praised. As one interviewee put it, 'It sounds trite to say it, but the physical amount of money has to make a difference'.

- Overall, the programme was seen as a very welcome opportunity for a more integrated approach to provision for children in their early years and the development of new and innovative services, as well as the expansion of existing services that already met Sure Start Scotland objectives, such as Home-Start.
- Some interviewees commented that provision for the 0-3 age group had been previously neglected, and hoped to see the current developments continue within a broad approach to services for families and children.
- All felt that Sure Start Scotland had already made a difference and was enhancing the lives of children under four and their parents in Scotland. Like many of the Sure Start contact officers, providers could cite particular examples of families that had been helped, and brought a sense of a real difference being made to the lives of families with young children.
- This positive picture of the impact of Sure Start Scotland on service provision both specifically and generally was sometimes tempered by concern that competing priorities at local authority level were preventing the full allocation being spent on Sure Start Scotland services.

## Factors Reported to have Helped or Hindered the Development of Sure Start Scotland

Both local authority officers and service providers were asked to identify factors they saw as facilitating or inhibiting the process of developing services for young children and their families. Their comments are summarised below.

### Factors That Helped

- Pre-existing structures and relationships, including planning processes and models of inter-agency co-operation.
- Commitment to Sure Start Scotland objectives at planning and staffing levels.
- Childcare audits and Children's Services Planning Process giving a baseline from which to develop services.

- A dedicated Sure Start Scotland officer.
- Established skilled staff and existing children's or family centres.
- Control of funds at a local level.
- Local authorities also appreciated the Scottish Executive decision to allow them to develop services to suit their localities rather than prescribing a model.

### Factors That Hindered

- Poor relationships across sectors at planning or local level, or little experience of joint working.
- Low levels of existing services.
- No local policy context.
- Financial difficulties within the local authority.
- Local recruitment problems.
- A range of financial issues at local and national levels, including the allocation of funds on an annual basis. Some local authorities reported difficulties in "protecting" Sure Start Scotland resources from competing priorities, given that they are not ring-fenced.

## Conclusion

### The Positive Impact of the Sure Start Scotland Programme

Sure Start Scotland is generally regarded as a major impetus for change and development, regardless of the different starting points of authorities at the outset of the programme:

- It has been described as a 'catalyst' that has galvanised the energies of staff across agencies, the voluntary sector and people in local communities.
- Most interviewees report that it has significantly improved both the approach taken to and the level of services provided for the 0-3 age range.
- At the strategic level, many authorities reported that Sure Start Scotland has allowed a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to services for this group for the first time.
- At the service delivery level, it is said to have altered the focus of work with children by seeing them in the wider context of the family and community setting and no longer just working with the child in isolation.



- Sure Start Scotland, with its emphasis on joint working, has meant that specifically tailored and integrated care plans for individual children and their families are being put in place more systematically.

### Issues in Delivering an Effective Programme

Although the mapping identified considerable achievements within almost all local authorities, it also highlighted areas of difficulties and some weaknesses.

- With some exceptions, there was little evaluation of services, nor of the effectiveness of the planning process or partnership working.
- Many of those interviewed described a tension between developing targeted and universal provision, and the importance of developing de-stigmatised services.
- At the same time, it was recognised by local authorities that it is difficult to provide services to all of those who might need them, especially some of the hardest to reach or those from very marginalised groups.
- Partnership working, especially involving the health sector, could also be more developed, and barriers to effective joint planning and joint working further broken down.
- At the level of strategic planning, local authorities are at different stages in including service providers, the voluntary sector and parents into the planning process.

### Wider Issues Related to Sure Start Scotland

The models being developed under Sure Start Scotland, while certainly aiming to strengthen families and communities, do not seriously challenge the persistence of structural inequalities.

- Most care work is done by women, and in practice this is reinforced in service development, which tends to support mothers of very young children, or women as childcare workers.
- The gendered division of labour is thus unintentionally reinforced, and despite improvements being made through training, working conditions and pay, the childcare sector remains low status and low paid.
- Although it is unreasonable to expect the limited funding from Sure Start Scotland to be able to effect large scale social change, very few projects or services were specifically aimed at involving men either as parents or as carers, although, of course, services were for parents not just mothers, and men are sometimes recruited as childcare workers.

Although services were specifically described as involving parents in identifying their needs and planning support requirements, how this actually operates in practice remains to be further researched. It may be very difficult for those who are most vulnerable and marginalised to articulate their needs, especially if this implies that their parenting skills may be inadequate and that the social and emotional development of their child may be in jeopardy.

## Recommendations

### At Scottish Executive Level

- Clearer guidelines about information requirements should be issued by the Executive to local authorities.
- Develop evaluation alongside the programme, with clear guidance to local authorities about quantitative and qualitative criteria.
- Reduce funding uncertainty by longer notice of actual allocation and continuity of funding.
- Further consolidate joint working at national level across sectors to help inform practice at local level.
- Bring developments for children under four into wider strategies for children, young people and families.
- Provide more opportunities for local authorities and others to share and disseminate good practice.

### At Local Authority Level

- Improve the inclusiveness of the planning process.
- Improve joint working within the local authority itself.
- Develop working relationships with the health sector.
- Develop coherent strategy for monitoring and evaluation.
- Share good practice within and between local authorities.
- Improve parental involvement.
- Continue to improve conditions for childcare workers.
- Encourage fathers and men to become involved.
- Consider the range of expertise in the voluntary sector and in other services.

## Appendix 1

### Assumptions Made in Quantifying the Benefits of Sure Start Scotland

In managing the information given to us during the research by local authorities, a number of strategies and assumptions were developed for dealing with imperfect numerical information. All of these err on the side of caution resulting in a conservative estimate of the numbers of extra places, parents and children serviced by Sure Start Scotland. These assumptions were sometimes discussed and agreed in dialogues with local authorities. They are itemised below:

- All local authorities were asked for baseline figures, that is for the number of places for children under four and the actual number of children under four and their parents using particular types of services prior to Sure Start Scotland. In calculating the benefit of Sure Start Scotland the baseline figures were deducted from the first year figures. In a small number of cases, baseline figures were not given but additional numbers of places, children and parents assisted by Sure Start Scotland were given and hence no deduction was required.
- Occasionally numbers given were for children aged 0-5 and not 0-3. Where this was the case, a calculation was made of two thirds of the figure given to represent the proportion of 0-3s.
- Not all local authorities provided information on both the number of places provided by a service and the number of children and/or parents using the places. Where only numbers of places were given, we have taken one full-time place to mean one child. Where only numbers of children were given, we have taken one child to mean one place. Where only numbers of families were given, we have taken one family to mean one parent and one child.
- In some cases, parents and children supported are from the same family. In some cases, these are counted as **only** parents or children.
- Unless told otherwise, we assumed that the figures for years one, two and three are total numbers of parents and children using services. Hence the number using these services before Sure Start Scotland have been subtracted in order to calculate the **extra** parents and children helped by Sure Start Scotland.
- Some numbers given to us have been excluded because they are not meaningful. For instance, occasionally numbers of childminders were provided but no data for child places or children supported.
- Data relating to resource work, such as Book Start, toy library and mobile crèche provision are presented separately because these reach large numbers of children/families but provide a much less intensive service which would otherwise artificially inflate the number of children supported overall.

## Appendix 2

### Local Authority Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with one person in each local authority named by the local authority as their contact person for Sure Start Scotland. In a small number of cases, the contact officer named an additional contact with whom we communicated concerning financial information.

### List of Service Providers Interviewed\*

Aberlour Child Care Trust  
Barnardos, West Lothian  
Capability Scotland  
Children 1st  
Dunbeth Nursery Centre, Coatbridge  
East Dunbartonshire Libraries Project  
Hamiltonhill Early Learning Centre, Glasgow  
Home-Start  
Jeely Piece, Castlemilk, Glasgow  
Montrose Family Support Team, Angus  
NCH Action for Children, National Office in Scotland  
One Plus  
Orkney Pre-school Play Association, Orkney  
Scottish Childminding Association  
Scottish Pre-School Play Association  
Stepping Stones for Families

\* Main office for Scotland unless otherwise specified.