

## Key Indicators for the Evaluation of Sure Start

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ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The following key indicators, which inform the ongoing evaluation of Sure Start, are set out in Section One under three key headings:

- Outcomes;
- Quality of provision; and
- Leadership and Management.

The indicators in Section Two are more specifically designed for the Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds but will also be considered as best practice for any additional programme which has children of a similar age.

As the ongoing evaluation of Sure Start identifies effective practice, with good outcomes for children and families, these indicators will be reviewed and updated.

## SECTION ONE

### OUTCOMES

#### ***Quality Indicators***

- There is evidence of improvement in the children's learning and development, including their speech, language and communication skills as a result of their participation in Sure Start.
- Relevant qualitative and quantitative information indicates good or better progress is being made in children's learning and development, including the development of children's speech, language and communication skills.
- Current individual case studies indicate clear benefits and progress being made for children and parents.
- Children are well prepared to benefit from and make a smooth transition to their next stage of learning.
- Parents have improved confidence, skills and knowledge of how to support their children's learning and development, including speech, language and communication skills as a result of their participation in Sure Start.

### QUALITY OF PROVISION

#### ***Quality Indicators: Child-focused***

- The staff plan high quality, enjoyable experiences which promote children's learning and development, including their speech, language and communications skills.
- The planning takes into account the importance of children's social and physical development and is implemented in a holistic and integrated approach.
- High quality, age-appropriate resources and the overall learning environment support children's learning and development.
- Staff interactions with the children are tailored to be age and stage appropriate and support the children's learning and development, including their speech, language and communication skills.
- Staff track the children's progress and use the information to inform future planning and communicate with parents.
- Information is used to identify delays in children's development, including speech, language and communication and used to plan suitable interventions and support from other relevant professionals and the parents.

- Relevant information is shared with the feeder pre-school setting to ensure a smooth transition and build on their prior learning for both the child and the parents.
- The staff have the skill and understanding to support the children's learning and development, including their speech, language and communication skills. They embed their training effectively into their day to day practice.

**Quality Indicators: Parent/Carer-focused**

- An inclusive and welcoming ethos, based on respectful and supportive relationships, builds trust and creates a climate in which all parents feel welcomed and valued.
- The planned programme for parents includes a focus on supporting their child's learning and development as a key element and are well matched to the needs of the local families.
- Parents are well supported to be a part of their children's learning and are provided with meaningful opportunities to do so, linked to their level of need. (i.e. more complex needs require a higher degree of professional intervention and intensity of support.)
- There is evidence that the support provided leads to improved confidence and skills of the parents in their role as their child's first educator and in making improvements to their home learning environment
- There is a high level of participation and retention in the programmes/services provided for parents.
- There is effective communication between the parents and the Sure Start staff in the best interests of the children.
- The staff<sup>1</sup> have the necessary personal qualities, skills and understanding to support effectively the parents in helping their children's learning and development.
- The staff grow in confidence and skill to support effectively parents and children as a result of their training.
- Effective communication among staff within the Sure Start project informs an effective joined-up approach and support pathway to meeting the needs of families.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff here refers to any member of staff who engages directly with children and parents. It may include, for example, the staff for the two year old programme, staff running parenting programmes, home visits, baby massage, crèche or other.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT<sup>2</sup>

### *Quality Indicators*

- The leadership, management and staff at all levels have a clear vision about the purpose of Sure Start and how their work contributes to achieving this vision.
- There are clear roles and responsibilities and clear lines of communication and accountability.
- There is effective recruitment and retention of parents and children who are most in need of the Sure Start services.
- The quality of the staff's work to support learning and development, including, speech, language and communication skills with the children and parents is monitored and evaluated and feedback is provided to bring about improvement.
- Staff are provided with relevant opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge on how to promote children's speech, language and communication and support parents in their role.
- The range of professional expertise employed within the project is identified and used well to build staff capacity.
- Where a deficit of expertise is identified within the project links are made with a relevant range of external professionals.
- Effective processes for monitoring and evaluation provide evidence of outcomes for children and parents.
- Robust systems are in place to monitor the impact of staff training on improving provision and outcomes for the children and parents.
- There are well-developed links between the project and the next stage of learning for both children and parents, to build on progress made in children's learning and development.
- Leadership and management, place a high priority on self-evaluation and as a result there is evidence of continuous improvement in quality and outcomes.
- The programme support specialist for the two year old programme supports self-evaluation in settings and helps them to make an objective assessment of how well they are doing.
- Leadership and Management place a high emphasis on keeping children and adults safe.

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<sup>2</sup> Leadership and management refers in the main, to those staff within the Sure Start project who hold direct responsibilities for leading, developing and managing aspects of the project's work. This may include, for example, the project manager, early year's coordinator, and team leaders for home visiting. It may refer to those who provide external support and guidance.

## SECTION TWO

### Quality Indicators for the Developmental Programme for 2-3year olds

#### ***Outcomes for children: (focusing on social and emotional, language and communication, physical and cognitive development)***

In line with their age and stage of development the children are making suitable progress in their learning and development.

In particular the children:

- build relationships, are eager to learn and experience high levels of involvement in their play;
- begin to regulate their own actions and behaviours, discover boundaries and rules, express feelings and emotions appropriately, have a voice and indicate preferences;
- actively explore their environment and resources using their bodies and senses to engage through trial and error;
- are increasingly creative in their use of materials and begin to represent the world around them;
- move their bodies with increasing confidence and competence, using both gross and fine motor skills;
- listen, respond and initiate interactions with adults and peers using verbal and non-verbal cues;
- respond to songs, rhymes, stories and exploring books; and
- are well prepared for their next stage of learning.

#### ***Outcomes for parents***

In increasing measure, and with appropriate support parents:

- attend and participate in programmes and engage with other relevant services regularly;
- have increasing confidence and skills to communicate and play with their child to support their learning and development;
- make positive changes in their home learning environment to facilitate learning and development (routines, behaviour strategies, reading books, and so on);
- work co-operatively and in collaboration with staff to meet the individual needs of their child;

- have an increased sense of well-being, inclusion and participation; and
- understand their role in supporting their child's learning and have a positive view of the benefits of education.

### ***Provision***

The learning environment:

- provides distinct areas and adequate space both indoors and outdoors in which to be active, to rest, be imaginative, encourage exploration, and to eat together;
- has an attractively and thoughtfully presented layout to encourage autonomy in learning, invite exploration and choice; and
- has thoughtfully presented equipment which is age and stage-appropriate, including real and natural items, books, relevant photographs and pictures to link with the family.

The role of the staff with the children:

- builds trusting and dependable relationships with the children through interactions that are natural, warm and sincere;
- enables mutual sharing in the learning process;
- through the organisation of the day and approach of the staff allows the children time to make choices, experiment and explore, for repetition, to make decisions and solve problems in how to use materials;
- by using the child's name, giving eye contact, listening, allowing time to respond, observing before becoming involved helps them to learn;
- develops well the children's speech, language and communication skills through effective and age appropriate interactions in line with the appropriate guidance; and
- encourages participation in action songs, rhymes, music and movement, stories and exploring books.

In working with the parents, the staff:

- are confident and competent in building trusting and caring relationships;
- value and promote the role of the parents as the children's first educators;
- encourage and promote regular involvement in the programme by the parents/carers;
- model play skills, interactions and behaviour strategies in a manner that encourages the parents' participation with their own child when attending the programme;

- support parents who are not attending or participating through signposting and collaboration with other relevant Sure Start services;
- work effectively in collaboration with parents in the early identification of need and planned interventions;
- meet parents to discuss their child's progress; and
- advise how they can help and support their child at home and signpost them where relevant to other services.

### ***Planning and assessment***

- Staff plan a well-balanced and stimulating programme which is underpinned by the guidance from the Department of Education and recognises the "holistic" nature of development and learning.
- The planning places a strong emphasis on room layout, presentation of resources and experiences that promote the children's social and emotional development, physical development, speech, language and communication development and cognitive development through exploring and thinking.
- The planning is linked closely to the assessment of children's development, identifies suitable progression in the use of resources and informs the role of the adult to guide the staff effectively in their communication and approach with the children.
- Staff reflect on and record the children's responses, assess their progress, evaluate the effectiveness of the programme and modify the learning experiences accordingly both for individual children and the whole group.
- The assessment of children's responses, learning and development are shared with parents and other Sure Start staff, and the feeder pre-school with parental agreement, to support early intervention and smooth transitions.
- Staff with the help of other professionals, identify specific learning, developmental and emotional needs of the children and provide effective support.
- Staff recognise that parents are central to the well-being of the child and plan a range of regular, enjoyable and accessible opportunities for parents, carers to be involved in the setting with their child.
- Staff regularly assess and review the effectiveness of their methods for involving parents to inform and improve their practice.
- Staff consider the range of parents/carers and their level of need when planning their involvement (literacy skills, newcomer, rural/transport, men).
- Staff contribute to a joined-up approach to supporting parents' role in promoting home learning through effective communication, workshops, information and links to home visiting or other Sure Start services.

For Leadership and Management refer to the indicators in Section One.