

# NIACE Research and Development



## Key Findings



Photos courtesy of SureStart

## A Training Needs Analysis (Partnership Working) of Sure Start Managers

### Abstract

Research on the training needs of Sure Start Local Programme (SSLP) and Children's Centre managers, with a particular emphasis on needs related to partnership working, was undertaken by NIACE and *Learning Links*<sup>1</sup> in 2005.

The aim of the project was to identify the essential elements that should be included in a training programme for managers of SSLPs and Children's Centres to support and promote effective multi-agency and partnership working to deliver high quality integrated services.

<sup>1</sup> A research consultancy headed by Margaret Whalley

#### Research methodology:

- ❖ A wide range of research and guidance literature was reviewed to provide the context and design a model job description including publications from the Sure Start Unit. Literature on working with volunteers, parents, families, family learning, building sustainable communities and workforce development was also examined.
- ❖ The Developing A Curriculum Methodology (DACUM), a job/occupational analysis approach which determines the tasks performed in a job, was used to help design a model job description. This outlined the role, knowledge, skills and aptitudes required by a manager in relation to the delivery of a partnership mission, aims and values. Two focus groups of experienced SSLP and Children's Centre managers from four different regional settings deliberated over the descriptions and helped refine and validate the model.

### Key Findings

#### The main conclusions of the project are:

Managers agreed that the following roles, knowledge, skills and aptitudes were critical to the successful delivery of a partnership:

- ❖ Role/duty: the purpose or 'mission' of a Sure Start/Children's Centre manager is to provide leadership and to promote and provide evidence of high quality integrated services. Areas of competence that successful workers in the occupation must demonstrate or perform include developing staff and members of the partnership; involving parents; involving the voluntary and community sector; promoting integration across service locations; working towards an integrated service across early

education, childcare, support services and health advice; and creating a quality framework.

- ❖ In relation to knowledge, it was *very critical* to know the roles of other professional colleagues; the inspection framework for Children's Services; local, regional and international initiatives; laws, policies, protocols and procedures e.g. child protection, first aid, health and safety, crime prevention, managing risk, employment law; and ethical standards.
- ❖ A wide range of skills were considered *very critical* for managers and participants, for example, multi disciplinary working; project management; relationship building - with a range of agencies, services and individuals; objective setting; visioning; and giving and receiving feedback from children, parents and carers.
- ❖ Aptitudes or traits required of a Sure Start manager include flexibility; approachability; tolerance; a positive attitude to change; the ability to motivate, build self-confidence and self-esteem; and being inclusive were all considered critical. Participants suggested managers have the ability to drive change; a sense of humour; resilience; be organised and a good communicator.

### Managers need to be able to:

- ❖ Effectively communicate and engage.
- ❖ Work with other professionals and across professional boundaries.
- ❖ Share information and develop awareness of the law and guidance relating to sharing information.

All managers will have an ongoing need to acquire and refine the range of skills and competences needed for effective multi-agency leadership and partnership development. The priorities identified by the focus groups include:

- ❖ Relationship building
- ❖ Influencing
- ❖ Multi disciplinary working
- ❖ Brokerage
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Consensus building
- ❖ Finance and budgeting

## Recommendations

Further research on the following issues would be valuable:

- ❖ Barriers and obstacles limiting the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to engage fully with Sure Start/Children's Centres.
- ❖ Parents involved in Sure Start/Children's Centre - their 'learning journeys' and their role in identifying needs for multi-agency delivery.

## Output

- ❖ NIACE (2005) *A Training Needs Analysis (Partnership Working) of Sure Start Managers*. A Report for the DfES. Leicester: NIACE. Unpublished.
- ❖ NIACE (2005) *A Training Needs Analysis (Partnership Working) of Sure Start Managers*. Summary. Leicester: NIACE.

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