



East Belfast
SureStart



Annual Report
2024-2025

Chairperson's Report

I am pleased to report that East Belfast Sure Start, has had another successful year, continuing to deliver quality and timely interventions for families in East Belfast. This report demonstrates how as an organisation we continue to deliver Sure Start policy outcomes of improving language skills, early identification of developmental delay, improved access to services and enhanced parenting skills.

It is important to recognise these outcomes are only achievable due to the commitment and dedication of staff and their holistic approach. On behalf of the Board, I would like to take the opportunity to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to all the external agencies and stakeholders that continue to work in collaboration with our staff team to ensure we can deliver as full a service as possible. I am extremely proud of everything the team has achieved, and the continued positive feedback from our inspecting bodies on the quality of our premises, staff and service.

I would like to thank fellow board members for their commitment to Sure Start, and their continued support. We have 'full' meetings, with contributions offered on all agenda items. This level of interest is central to our success as a Board. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Education and SPPG for their ongoing and continued support of this vital programme.

We hope you enjoy the content of the report and are encouraged by it.

Bridgeen McCormick – Chairperson

Co-Ordinator's Report

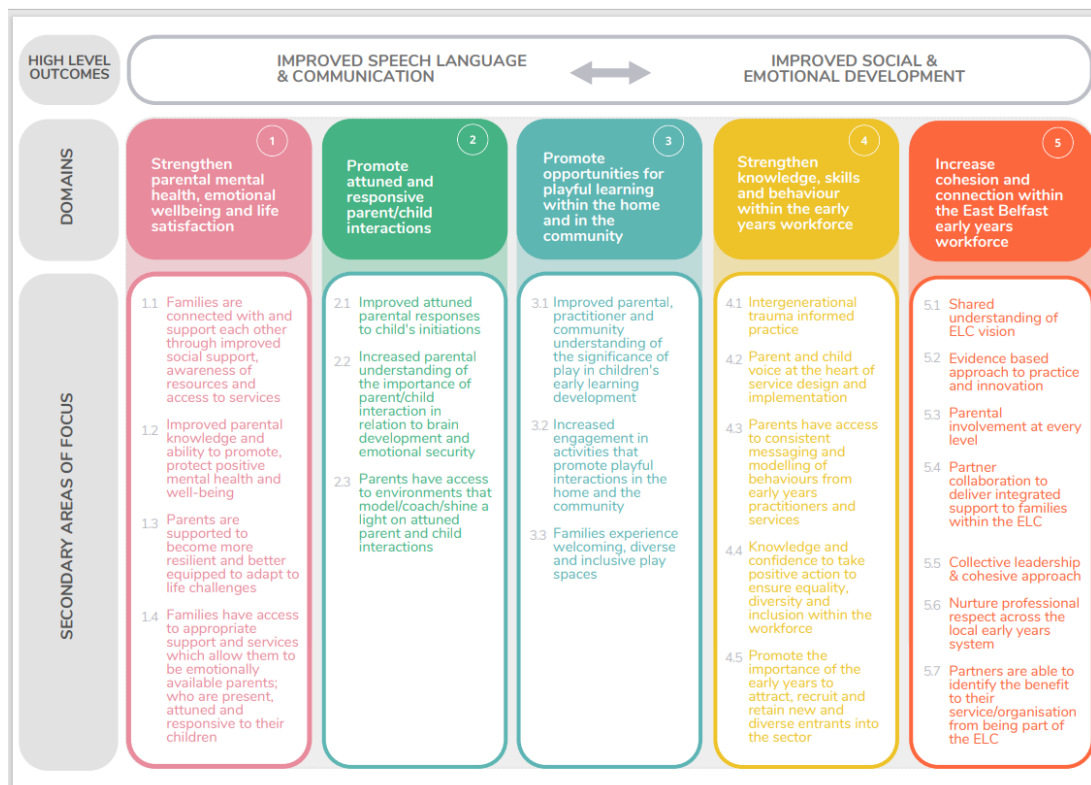
Safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives and there is never a dull day in East Belfast Sure Start as we strive with vision and passion to deliver these safe connections to the children and families in our service. We continue to do this with innovation and excellence and this can be seen by the outcomes in this report.

We could not do this work without the support of the community champions around us and we would especially like to acknowledge:-

Save the Children NI who continue to support the Building Block grants for families in East Belfast and this year supported us to deliver £10,540 funding to families in need of support.

Eastside Learning, a project of East Belfast Partnership who faithfully continue to travel along the road of improving outcomes for children in East Belfast and have done so for over 15 years.

These organisations together with over 30 others representing Early Years work in East Belfast form the Eastside Early Learning Community which has a framework for improving children's speech and language and communication outcomes and social and emotional development.



East Belfast Sure Start have been proud to lead on Domain No 2 – Attuned and Attentive Parenting and this year have been able to work together with the support of the community and parents to develop our first book called Connect with Me. This book gives makes me very proud not only because it sums up in so many ways our vision but also for the ability of our staff to be creative and generous.

EBCDA continue to support us to support our staff through mentoring and also through health and wellbeing workshops.

East Belfast Food Network, who help to support our families with practical assistance.

BookTrust NI, who faithfully over many years have supported us with book packs which we are able to share with our Programme for 2 Year Old children and our Parent and Toddler groups helping us promote a lifelong love of books.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, who with incredibly generous funding of Hagan Homes help us to support over 220 families every month with a book onto their doorstep.

Belfast City Council for their funding a cooking programme.

Mountpottinger Church of Ireland and Westbourne Presbyterian Church, who supply us with beautiful blankets that are made with love and care for our youngest arrivals.

Christian Fellowship Church Belfast for faithfully support us to support our families through times of hardship.

These organisations are just some of the true hero's of our communities infrastructure and they share these outcomes below with us.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my wonderful board of directors and trustees who are supportive and hold us to account in the most gracious of ways. They also own the outcomes that have been achieved and can be proud of their voluntary contribution to our organisation.

Tracey Ripley McElvogue – Coordinator

East Belfast Sure Start Board of Directors

Management Committee Members/role	Agency/Representative
Bridgeen McCormick Chairperson	Choice Housing Association Private Sector
Hilary McEvoy Treasurer	Independent (retired from Education Authority)
Barbara Wallace Vice Chairperson	Independent (Queen's University)
Bernie McConnell	Short Strand Community Forum Community
Ann Martin	Tullycarnet Community Support Services Community
Tanya Hughes	Ballybeen Women's centre Community
Louise McCullough	Independent Parents Representative
Barbara Wallace	Vice Chairperson
Jennifer Rainey	Tor Bank Special School Community
Nagesh Nagi	Independent Parents Representative
Samuel Robinson Secretary	Megain Memorial Church of the Nazarene Community
Claire Humphrey – resigned Oct 24	Barnadoes
Gillian Hamilton – resigned Oct 24	Eastside Learning, Eastside Partnership Community

Three Consultant Observers advise and support the board Kathy Watters Belfast City Council,

Josephine Gibson Health Visitor Lead, Norma Sinclair Early Years Team – BHSCT

Our Staff Team

38 staff working in finance and administration, Family Support, Nurture and Early Years services.

Areas of work and Engagement Statistics

We operate in nine local ward areas determined by being in the top 25% areas of deprivation.

Ballymacarrett, Woodstock, Island, The Mount, Bloomfield SOA 1 and SOA 3, Tullycarnet, Cregagh, Ballybeen Housing Estate

There is a population of **1616**, 0-3 year olds in East Belfast Sure Start catchment area.

We received a total of **313** referrals from various sources (see table) which translated into 79% of registrations

Self	177
HV	88
SS	9
SLT	8
Miscellaneous	31

The project also received referrals through Encompass health data system via the hospitals from a parent to be 16 week appointment

176 referrals translated into 35% of new registrations

Registrations	24/25
New children	342
New mums	267
New dads	95
Pregnant mums	97
Families	266

Registration	2024-2025	Cumulative Total	Percentage Uptake	Cumulative Percentage
Number of <u>Children</u> registered	342	1539	% uptake of Children (NI Average 51%)	43%
Number of <u>Mothers</u> registered	267	1378	% uptake of Mothers (NI Average 53%)	53%
Number of <u>Fathers</u> registered	95	430	% uptake of Fathers (NI Average 26%)	24%
Number of <u>Families</u> registered	266	1395	% uptake of Families (NI Average 63%)	54%
Antenatal	97	129	% uptake of Antenatal	73%

Home Visits are carried out across all our services as illustrated in the table below. A total number of 1172 visits were carried out in 24/25

Additional Needs	Home Visits to support Additional Needs	135
Antenatal Support	Antenatal Home Visit	59
Breastfeeding Support	Breastfeeding Support Home Visit	32
Developmental Programme 2-3 YO	Home visit	240
Family Support	Home Visits by Family Support Team	538
Play Programmes	Short Strand Home Visits for Child Development Programme.	38
Play Programmes	First Steps - Home Visits for Child Development Programmes.	13
Postnatal	Postnatal Home visit	84
Speech and Language	Home Visits to support Speech and Language Development	33

During these home visits we are able to **signpost** families to support services:-

Addiction Services	0
Audiology	0
Autism Services	27
Benefits Advice	43
Breastfeeding Support	21
Charitable Aid	187
Child Development Clinics	21
Citizens Advice Bureau	27
Community Paediatrician	6
Community Services	204
Counselling	1
Dentist	37
Disability	2
Early Years	17
Education Services	102
Ethnic Minorities	32
Family Support Hubs	26
Financial Advice	9
Fire Service	0
Food Banks	80
Ginger Bread	0
GP	104
Health Visitor	85
Home Safety	23
Homestart	5
Housing Executive	16
Legal Advice	9
Local Housing	2
Mental Health (Parent / Child)	5
Midwife/Antenatal (HSCT)	40
NICMA	0
Occupational Therapy (HSCT)	6
Physiotherapist	3

We also are able to distribute resources to support our families through visits and programmes.

Resource Type	Quantity Given
Programme for 2 Year Old	77
Antenatal	499
Baby	178
Books	333
Breastfeeding	42
Family Support	257
Dental	87
First Aid	2
Health Promotion	244
Information	110
Home Safety	4
New Registration	204
Parenting	209
Play	436
Postnatal	68
Speech and Language	1315
Toys	35
Transition	1

Early Learning Team

1 x Early Years Lead

1 x Early Years Centre Supervisor

5 x Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Old Supervisors

9 x Developmental Programme for 2 Year Olds Assistants

1 x Little Learners Supervisor

2 x Little Learners Assistants

4 x Early Years Workers

Key Areas of Focus for Early Learning Team

Location	Services
Ballyoran (Ballybeen Housing Estate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Programme for 2 Year Olds (a.m.) • Child Development session (Wednesday and Thursday p.m.)
East Belfast Network Centre- Room 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Programme for 2 Year Olds (a.m.)
East Belfast Network Centre – Room 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Programme for 2 Year Olds (a.m.) • Child development session (Mon/ Tuesday p.m. and Wednesday/ Thursday p.m.)
Early Years Centre – Play Away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Development Sessions • Parent and Child Together • Crèche for parenting programmes.
Early Years Centre – Crawl 2 Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bumps to Babies Café x 2 • Crèche for parenting programmes
Carew Centre Room 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme for 2 year olds (a.m.) • Parent and Toddler Group
Carew Centre Room 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Explorers programme • Child Development Sessions (Monday / Tuesday p.m.)
126 Albertbridge Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Learners am/ p.m. • Play and Discover sessions



Early Years Outcomes

How Much Did We Do?	How Well Did We Do It?
<p>Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Olds:</p> <p>Ballyoran Programme x 128 sessions x 12 children</p> <p>Carew Programme x 135 sessions x 12 children</p> <p>Templemore 1 Programme x 134 sessions x 13 children</p> <p>Templemore 2 Programme x 130 sessions x 15 children</p> <p>Little Explorers x 131 sessions x 6 children Little Explorers is a tailored programme for 2-3 year old that has a reduction in the number of children thus a higher staff ; child ratio to provide a more intensive nurturing environment.</p> <p>Home Visits Programme for 2 Year Old 202 Home Visits carried out by Programme Staff - These home visits are carried out before the child begins the programme, 2 during the term and a transition home visit at the end of the academic year. These home visits provided continuity between the setting and the child's home and encourage that partnership between the parent and staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>91% of sessions achieved – Occasions closures have taken place due to issues with building e.g. heating/ hot water or staff shortages across the settings.</i> • <i>Number children registered – 100% target (on occasions there will be a turnover of children due to a child moving out of area or accepting a place in nursery. programmes have a waiting list of children for the places.</i> • <i>100% target achieved. Key workers of each child carried out four home visits per year to provide home/ setting continuity and allows parents the space to share any of their thoughts or ask for advice on their parenting journey.</i>

Transition Reports – 54

Early Years practitioners across the programme for 2- 3 year olds/ Little Explorers will provide a communication passport that will be sent to the nursery/ pre school that the child has been allocated a place for the following academic year. These passports are completed with all those involved in the child's sure start journey including the parent. This year we had 11 preschools that received the passports.

Stay and Plays x 50

Stay and play sessions are held once per month and part of the child's journey within the programme for 2- 3 year olds.

Induction workshop x 5**Wellcomm screening for programme for 2-3 Year Old children**

WellComm is a Speech and Language Toolkit for Screening and Intervention in the Early Years and plays a role in identifying children with potential language difficulties and offers a range of customised intervention activities to help support all children's language development.

Child Development Sessions (CDS)

The child development sessions are for children and families that have been identified by our Family Team/ Peri Natal Team as benefiting from early years support and a whole family approach. Children will receive 2 sessions per week at 2 hours per session and a parent and child together session once per month.

Ballyoran CDS

13 children x 77 sessions

- *54 transitions sent – 100% target achieved. These provide the children with a seamless transition between sure start and their pre-school nursery places.*

- 100 % target achieved

- 100% target achieved

- 100% target achieved. Bi lingual screen also carried out.

- 100% Target achieved

- 81% of children achieved. We previously had 3 staff available for this session but have reduced it to 2 staff.
- 92% of sessions achieved. Issues such as broken heating system required unplanned closures. 100% Target achieved

<p>Parent and Child Together x 10 sessions</p> <p>Carew CDS 121 sessions x 16 children</p> <p>Parent and Child together sessions</p> <p>Crawl 2 Play 8 children x 48 sessions</p> <p>Away 2 Play Templemore CDS 163 sessions 30 children</p> <p>Parent and Child Together x 28 children x 16 sessions</p> <p>Play Away CDS 230 sessions x 48 children.</p> <p>Parent and Child Together 42 children x 26 sessions</p> <p>Crèches for Parenting Courses/Programmes These creches are to allow parents to access Peer Support/ Parenting Groups e.g. Incredible Years x 6 groups x 35 children</p> <p>Summer Transition Programmes 46 children</p> <p>Oral Health Programme 6 settings x 54 children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of children achieved. • 89% sessions achieved. Due to broken heating system. • 100% target achieved. • 100% children achieved • 92% sessions achieved • 97% sessions achieved. • 100% children target achieved • 93% children achieved • 94% sessions achieved • 100% of children achieved 91% sessions achieved • 84% children Target achieved • 87% sessions achieved. • 91% achieved • 100% targets achieved • 100% target achieved
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<p>Albertbridge Parent and Toddler</p> <p>56 children / 49 parents x 35 sessions</p> <p>Early Years 1:1 Support</p> <p>47 sessions x 25 children</p> <p>Summer Scheme</p> <p>Trips to Streamvale Farm, Newcastle, Bangor and Carnfunnock were arranged by the Early Years Team over the summer period. Families availing of services over the summer period were invited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% target achieved • 100% sessions achieved • 84% children achieved <p>Trip 1 – 40 children Trip 2 – 37 children Trip 3 – 38 children Trip 4 – 52 children</p>
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How Well Did We Do It?

- **Our settings**

Our 'home from home' environments are warm nurturing and encourage awe and wonder. Our spaces are calm, tranquil to support children to be curious, follow their own interests, and build upon ideas at their own pace.

- **Developmental Programme for 2-3 Year Old Specialist Visits.**

Tanya reduced our visits to two per setting this year. Her reports focus on the strong foundation of East Belfast Sure Start and the high levels of engagement and understanding of what our children and families need. She praises our consistent ethos and motivation to take new learning on board.

- **Inspection process**

The Early Years Team carry out a number of social services inspections each year.

Comments this year included

'The staff were very attentive and caring towards the children and sensitive to the needs of each child'

'Sure Start focuses on providing a warm and nurturing environment with a home from home experience for the children.'

'The Inspection observations found high quality child/adult interactions, within a child-led and child focused environment.'

'The positive impact of staff's approach was reflected and projected in the attending children's smiling, happy faces, joyful chatter and laughter.'

Transition Process

'When transitions in the early years are managed sensitively it lays the foundations for positive feelings towards the many other transitions children will face through life.'

East Belfast Sure Start have continued to develop their work in this area in partnership with the local nursery and pre -school settings. We have continued to use the communication passport and gathered feedback from the local nursery schools on how effective they found the tool.



'It was child centred and personal to that child. The passport had the most important information on it - all about the child, likes/dislikes/how to help, how they communicate.'

We were prepared for the individual child as we were aware of their needs and how to support them.

The passport give in detail what works for each child, their likes ,dislikes, triggers etc This was helpful to know before children started

Allowed staff to prepare for the children. It was good to see what helped the children with their areas of difficulty and use the strategies that had previously worked. Helpful when speaking to any early years professionals invoked with the child.

We thought the way that it was set out was excellent with a photo of the child. We felt that we already knew them a little bit as it was so clearly set out with great advice and ideas to best support the child.

Staff Training

The Early Years Team have continued their professional development improving the quality of care and learning children receive and keeping updated on the latest practices, enhancing their skills, and fostering reflective teaching. This ongoing learning helps

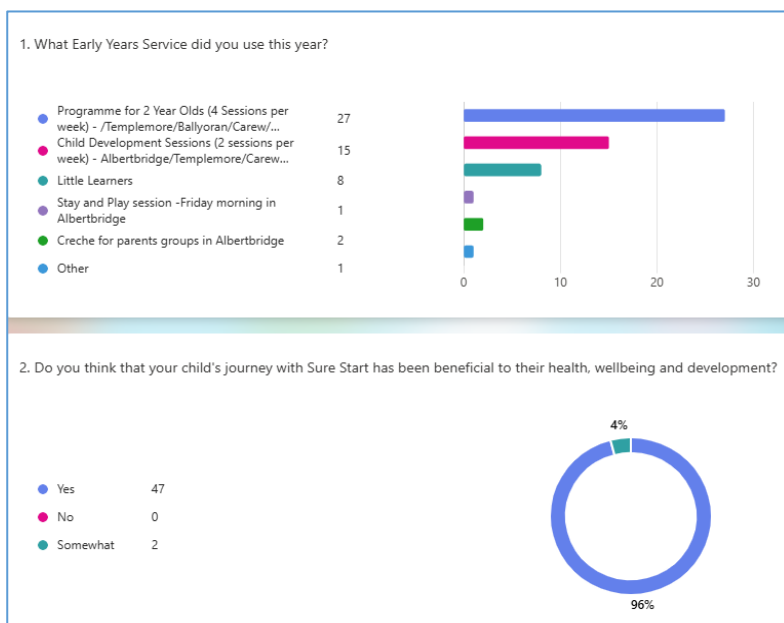
educators meet diverse child needs, build confidence and reduce burnout, and create nurturing, stimulating learning environments that promote children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth.

The Training Included:

- Developmental Programme for 2-3 year old training for new assistants
- Solihull
- Breastfeeding/ Responsive Feeding Refresher
- Sound Therapy Training
- Food Hygiene/ Health and Safety/ Fire Safety
- Inhouse training with Nurture Lead and Speech and Language Therapists
- Hanen
- Child Protection
- Connect with me training
- First Aid

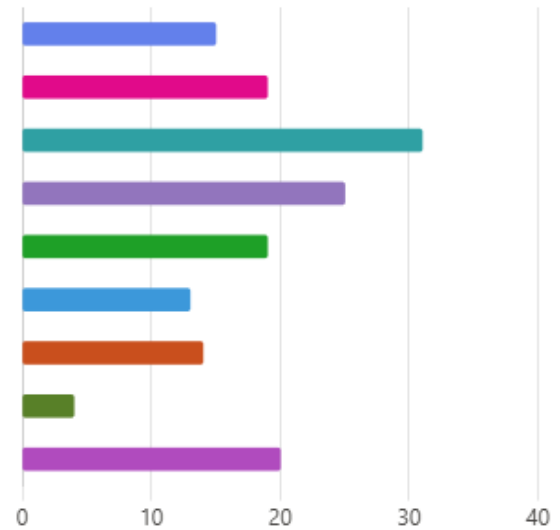
Is Anyone Better Off? - Parental Feedback

At sure start we recognise that parents/ carers are the most important people in their child's life. Our role is to actively listen to their voices and walk alongside them in their parenting journey. We must be reflective in our work and responsive to the families needs. Therefore, we need to ask parents, take their thoughts and feelings on sure start and plan for our future together.



5. Please tick any of the following that you do more of or do differently with your child as a result of something you have learnt from sure start. (you can tick more than one)

- Share books and read together 15
- Go for more walks/ play outdoors more 19
- Change the way we play together - follow my child's lead more 31
- Change how I interact/ communicate with my child 25
- Introducing new foods at home due to trying in sessions 19
- Changing routines - easier bedtimes, morning routines etc. 13
- Reduced use of any screen time at home 14
- Register with dentist 4
- More sociable with my child - go out to more groups/ with friends etc. 20



6. Has being part of the WhatsApp group been helpful for keeping touch with the staff and the programme?

- Yes 49
- No 0
- Somewhat 0



Ive benefitted with the amount of support and help from everyone within surestart. they where great and always make you feel secure in every way possible

My child didn't speak any English when he started at Sure Start and now he is practically fluent which makes me feel more secure sending him to nursery this year. The whole experience has been wonderful and I am so grateful.

It's been very supportive on my parenting journey

My confidence as a parent has grown massively due to the support provided

More confident and calm towards my child's development for the future nursery. we've spent time doing Sure Start activities together that otherwise I couldn't have been able to do (like the summer trips) and really enjoyed them.

Sure Start were absolutely amazing with both me and my son. They provided social and emotional support for both of us, making our lives as a family easier.

Was really helpful and supportive. Helped my daughter develop emotionally, physically, and psychologically.

Have you any other comments you would like to make regarding your Sure Start experience or any recommendations for improvement in the future?

Sure start has helped my daughter excel in parts I was concerned about e.g her speech and language & her confidence. She has come along so well with the help of the staff & everything they have taught her is amazing

I'm so happy with surestart and the staff. The difference in my child within months has been amazing and the staff have been so supportive and helpful.

I love sure start and I am so happy I was able to get my girl into the program. The change in her has made so much difference and I am forever grateful for the work of sure start.

Thank you for all your support and being there for Greyson helping him thrive yous became family we will miss yous

Surestart is amazing and without surestarts help I don't know where I would turn to

I wouldn't change a thing.the staff.the place.the environment. the advice.everything is fantastic.

No everything about surestart is amazing I wouldn't change a thing

Surestart is an essential part of our community and I would have been lost without it. words cannot describe the huge beneficial impact it has had on my life and surestart have been there for me when I had no one else

Early Years Lead

Family Support Team

Parent and Family Lead: Lisa Flynn

Family Support Workers:

Vicky Ferguson, Paula Montgomery, Sadie Harper, Courtney Moss and Laura Dan

Family Support Outcomes Home visiting	
<u>How much did we do?</u>	<u>How well did we do?</u>
Home Visits Target - 300 visits for 80 families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 98.3% target achieved 295 for 90 families (family number achieved).
Family Support 1:1 in settings Target - 140 for 60 adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% target achieved
Telephone call by member of Family Support – significant conversation Target -350 for 115 families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% target achieved
Ethnic Minority home visits Target 100 visits 35 families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% target achieved for visits• 94.2% target achieved for number of families (33)
Ethnic Minority Phone call to support parents Target 100 calls for 35 families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 93% target achieved for calls (93), target achieved for number of families (48)
Ethnic minority family needing interpreting service. Target 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 families received interpreter services for their home visits in conjunction with the Health Visiting team
Ethnic Minority 1:1 contact in centre Target 6 Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% target achieved
Initial Visits Target 130 visits for 100 families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 82.3% target achieved 107 visits for 101 families

How Well Did We Do It?

Our team of Family Support have healthy and strong working relationships with local health visitors to ensure maximum support for their families.

The team link in constantly with the community around them including professionals to enable resources to be given and signposting to happen.

All our staff team are trained in child protection and paediatric first aid. All our family support team are trained in UNICEF BFI to understand the importance of responsive feeding.

Other training includes: -

Emerging Leaders

Hanen

Neurodiversity Training

Sound Therapy

Gestalt & SLT refresher

BFI Refreshers

Solihull Refresher

Little hearts, body & mind training

Awesome at home

Teach Training

Cultural Awareness

Is Anyone Better Off?



The Voice of Parents

Moving from England away from family and a bad relationship, Sure Start helped me gain my confidence. Not just as a parent but living in a new community and not knowing anyone. I was able to meet others, and we formed a group outside of Sure Start, not just for my child but for me as an adult not just a mum. I was someone's friend; someone's confidant and my child and these new people were my reason for getting up and going out.

I wish I had Sure Start earlier than I did. I lived in the wrong postcode before moving. I didn't own my house it was private rented, and I guess people think if you live in a nice house, you have money and are in good mental health. Unfortunately, I wasn't. After a breakup I was finally able to get the deposit together to move and I was in area! Yaaaay. After talking to the girls, I opened up and I knew I could trust them from the girls in the creche to my family support worker. I knew that I could have had special circumstances but at that time I just didn't want to tell just anyone about my life. I tell everyone about Sure Start now. A massive Thank you!

Parenting Support Peer Support & Cook It! - Paula Montgomery Mindfulness Mondays – Laura Dan	
How much did we do?	How well did we do it?
Peer Support – 1 session per week for 15 mums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 Mums used this service throughout the year • 100% target achieved
Finvoy Young Mums Group 1 session per week targeting 13 mums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92.3% achieved 12 mums attended.
Henry Programme (Programme facilitated by health visitors) 8 week programme for 10 mums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% achieved
Mindfulness Mondays 4 sessions for 6 mums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Sessions of take 5 sessions 100% achieved

How well did we do it?

Peer Support

Mothers or female carers of a child meet, discuss issues of common interest, information on child development, health, and education. A range of training courses and personal development opportunities are arranged, and the children are with the Early Years Team in

a child development session. These courses cover topics identified by the parents themselves. Some fun activities, coffee and chat are also part of the service after completing a programme or information sessions.

Peer Support Monthly Activities

April 24	Self Care
May 24	Play Sessions – water – sensory – physical - imaginary
June 23	Transitions
Sept 23	Take 5
Oct 23	Stress & Anxiety
Nov 23	Belfast City Council – Textiles – repairing clothes and recycling textiles
Dec 23	Christmas Crafting and Visit to Christmas Market
Jan 24	Play for Adults – going back to play to be able to play with your children.
Feb 24	Play continued. Surveys for QUB and the health Visiting Team.
March 24	Cook it!

Is Anyone Better Off?

I have a sight disability. The team have been amazing with me. Paula helps me when we are doing any information sessions if I need it and she checks in with me at every session. The group treats me “normally” and are always there for advice when I ask for it. I have to admit that the session is also 2 hours of adult chat, and I feel like I am learning for the benefit of my whole family.


This group has helped me so much. There has been so much learning. I want to thank the team for when I had a disagreement with my child’s daycare, and I was not strong enough to help myself. The staff advised me and gave me a voice. I found the confidence to talk to the Daycare. My child is now going through the programme for 2 and i look forward to learning more together.


Parent and Toddler Groups	
Courtney, Laura, Sadie, Paula	
How Much Did We Do?	How Well Did We Do It?
Weekly sessions excluding the summer Carew P&T	Target 40 families 49 families participated. 100%
Short Strand	25 families 24 families participated. 96%
Lagan Village	25 families 24 families participated. 96%
BT3 Group	20 families 22 families participated. 100%
Walkway	40 families 44 families participated. 100%

Parents and Tots provide a warm and welcoming space for parents to meet each other and for their children to socialize with other children. Our well-trained staff provide curious and welcoming play spaces and provide times where they can model what play looks like.

Parents and Tots provide great transitions for our parents who have been with us from Baby Club and Baby Café or who are new to Sure Start. It gives us a lovely way of getting to know the family and being able to spot any areas where more assistance may be needed.

Is Anyone Better Off?

 Laura told me about Family Support. I didn't feel I needed it. Every week after the Carew group, I just wanted to talk to her. I knew she listened. She smiled at me. She gave me answers but also helped me talk out the answers myself. She asked me again if I would like her to come and see me at home or go for walks etc. I never knew I needed a Laura, but I did, and she just built me back up. There was at least 1 person in my life just listening.

 Sadie is a very caring person. She remembers us all, what we like and what we said week before. She informs us of all goings on and where to get help if she does not know. She invites us to everything. Sadie help me when I felt alone and nowhere to go. She treats me as 1 person not just mum of my child. Bt3 was very good for my daughter, learning to play and share.

I just like that Sure Start have their own children and parent groups. There are a number of days to suit working parents who still want to be able to do things with their children. Sure Start also have more up to date activities and equipment. I am not running down the church ones, but sometimes you are just in a big hall and left to your own devices.

**Baby Café – 6-12 months
Vicky Ferguson**

This group transitions the parents and babies who have attended our Baby Club for 0-6 months.

How much did we do?

Tuesday Baby Café and Friday Baby Café. Target: 50 Adults Weekly Sessions

How well did we do it?

54 Mums attended throughout the year

The Baby Café invites parents with babies aged 6-12 months to enjoy play in a safe, appropriate environment with:

- Support from other mums/parents
- Rhythm & Rhyme
- Age-appropriate toys
- Health Promotion, benefits advice, weaning information.
- Speech & language, child development, additional needs information, sensory room/play sessions
- Visits from pharmacy, dietician and benefits advice

It's fab how we have somewhere to go after the baby club. While off on maternity there really is a full year of guidance and more if we need it. Vicky has been a great benefit. I was able to talk to her after the group and she helped me around my financial situation. She's warm and friendly. I've really enjoyed the 2 groups.

I have used sure start with all my children. I was an original small talk mum (teenage mum) when sure start started. I had a large gap between my first then next child. Over the years I have learned so much. I tend to use the baby programmes as this is the time I feel I need company and advice. Vicky's group was really helpful. The information we receive and help given is a something you can't buy. The sensory room is an added joy and the people who come in with information is something you don't get in toddler groups. Brilliant service!

Quiet Hour Courtney

Quiet Hour Parent and Toddler Group for anxious parents/children who had not been going to groups since Covid and for anxieties in general.

How much did we do?

Weekly group for 16 sessions for 8 families

How well did we do it?

- 100% target achieved
9 families attended

Is Anyone Better Off?

Latest Responses

"Sure start is extended family when you have few people around you"

"This group boosted my confidence Courtney was amazing"

"Lovely girls"

...

My wife and I decided that it was best that she go back to work and I would be a stay at home dad. I was anxious going to groups as they are mostly filled with woman. My child had "extra" needs and the dads worker told me about the quiet hour with less people which would suit both me and my child. This group was a lifeline to build my confidence, and also to introduce my child to more people. We loved our time, I honestly believe I would have been a lone dad just in the house or grocery shopping. We attended much more. Thank you Courtney for your time, invaluable advice and patience.

Incredible Years (Parenting Programme)

Courtney and Lisa

The Incredible Years (IY) Toddler programme is for parents (typically living in disadvantaged communities) with a child between the ages of two and three.

14 weekly sessions

8 families started the programme, 6 parents achieved the 11/13 attendance to pass this intensive 14-week course.

Parents learn strategies for responding sensitively to their child and discouraging unwanted behaviour. Two facilitators lead parents in weekly two-hour group discussions of mediated video vignettes, problem-solving exercises and structured practise activities addressing parents' personal goals.

Is Anyone Better Off?

This made me look back at how I was brought up and that I would like to correct things that I do because that is the way I was brought up. The girls were brilliant. They made me comfortable and put me at ease to join in.

I would recommend, gets you thinking

Sharing with others and getting new ideas was the best part of this for me. I know I am a good parent but the actual getting down to play and not interrupting or making my child play a certain way was all new to me and I get it now. Both girls were fab and I liked how they changed roles each week. They were both very funny.

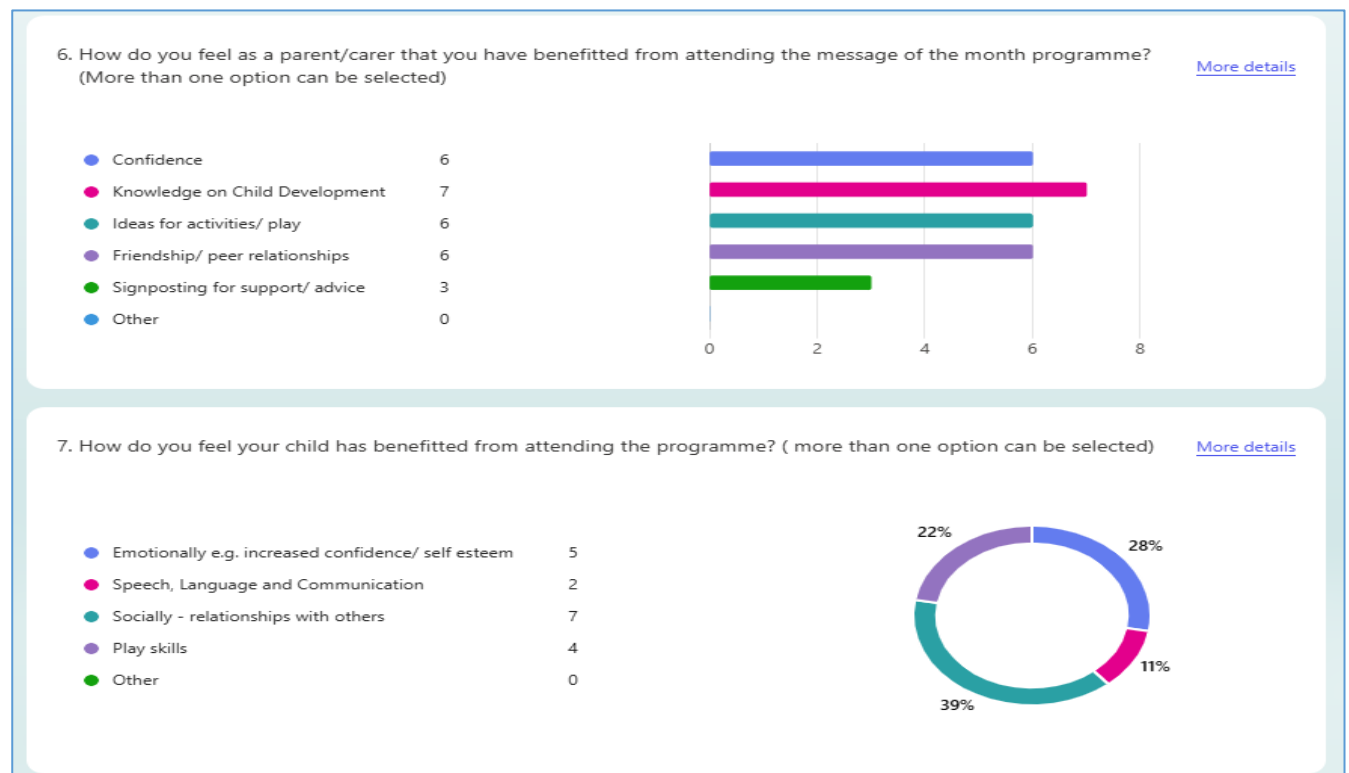
Good programme. I did not think I would stick it out but I did and I am happy I did it, I have been able to use what I have learned on lots of occasions

Parent and Child Together Workshops 0-1 & 1-2 (Message of the Month)

These programmes were designed to share our Message of the Month each month in an interactive way with parents and children. Messages which promote play, emotional regulation and speech and language.

Month	Description	1-2 yrs families attending
April	Movement is good for my body and my brain	12
May	I'm a happy baby when you...	5
June	Your love and patience make change easier for me	9
September	Sharing Books helps my brain to grow	6
October	My brain needs different sorts of play to help it grow	9
November	Screen Time – Use it Wisely	8
December	My smile is special, let's keep it that way	6
January	Healthy foods build a healthy brain	11
February	Words build my brain	7
March	Encouraging positive behaviour	7

Is Anyone Better Off?



Summer Programmes

- Toddler Day 22 Families
- Family day 14 Families
- Zoo trip 8 families
- 2 x Joe Jingles sessions
- Story Time and evaluation with Imagination library team. 6 families.

Parents Voice

Free trips help a lot. I just could not afford to take the children, and I also couldn't take them all myself. The girls help a lot, and we go to places where the children enjoy.

Being with the people outside is totally different. We all see how children are outside. Sometimes I learn from this and I realise that other people's children do the things my children do too. They are just learning boundaries. I don't feel I am bad mum.

Dads Work Lisa Flynn supported by Early Years staff	
How Much Did We Do?	How Well Did We Do It?
Saturday Morning Sessions Target 10 sessions to 15 families	100% Achieved 10 sessions to 17 families
1:1 work with dads 4 sessions to 2 families	100% achieved

Is Anyone Better Off?

I get time on my own with my child – no judgement.

I live in an apartment block, we get to leave, go to a safe environment with very good people.

I get to talk to other men and learn what they do here, I am from India and want to learn about the culture I live in.

I feel safe here. There are so many places I do not go to. Lisa treats everyone the same. I used to not go if my friend did not go. Now I talk to all the dads. We are just men who are fathers.

I can bring both my children, and the area is safe which they play in. The garden is amazing; they can just run.



Current Filters

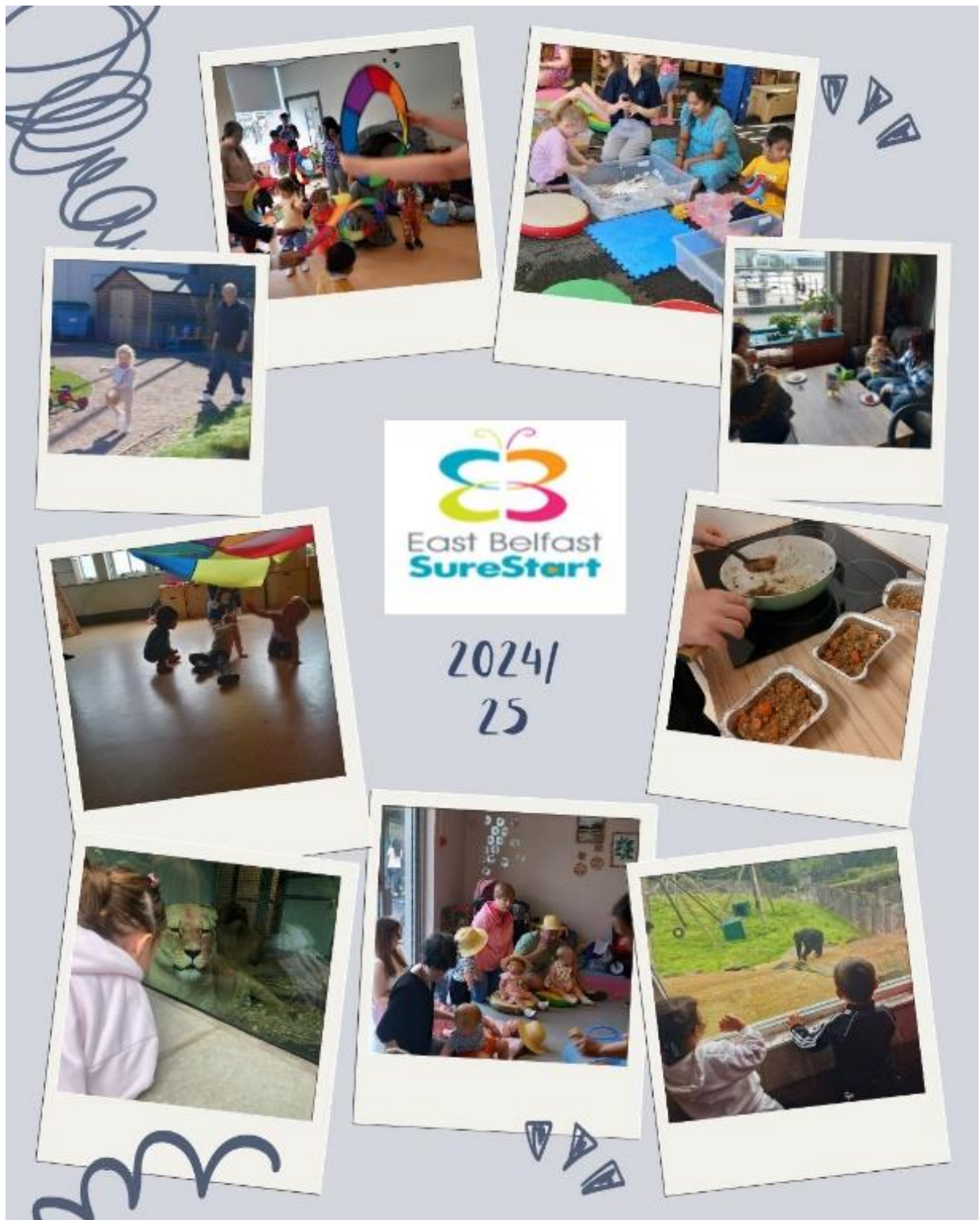
Account: Childcare Partnership | Service(s): BCCP - East Belfast Sure Start - FSEY | Star: Family Star (Early Years) | Lead Practitioner(s): All Lead Practitioners | Time Period: 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025 | Type of Engagement: All engagements active within time period | Engagement Used: All engagements (service users will be included multiple times) | Baseline: Earliest Star in Time period | Comparison: Latest Star in Time period | Total Service Users: 8

Are people making progress?

In 1+ outcome areas Percentage of people making progress in at least one outcome area 88%	In 2+ outcome areas Percentage of people making progress in at least two outcome areas 88%	In 3+ outcome areas Percentage of people making progress in at least three outcome areas 88%	Outcome areas showing progress Average number of outcome areas in which someone is making progress 3.1
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How much progress are people making in each outcome area?





Lisa Flynn – Family Support Lead

Nurture Report

How much did we do?	How well did we do it?
<p>Little Learners Child Development Group (2 groups Mon-Wed AM and Mon-Wed PM) 24 children over 2 year intake</p>	<p>100% achieved</p>
<p>Parent And Child Together Sessions Monthly Stay and Play sessions</p>	<p>100% delivered 96% children/adults attended</p>
<p>Induction Workshop 1 session per group</p>	<p>100% achieved</p>
<p>Graduation Workshop 1 session per group</p>	<p>100% achieved</p>
<p>Parent Introductory Workshop 1 session per group</p>	<p>100% achieved</p>
<p>Home Visits Target 30 visits delivered to 24</p>	<p>Delivered 54 visits to 23 adults /children Overachieved</p>
<p>Telephone Calls Target 10 phonecalls delivered to 6 adults</p>	<p>Delivered 20 phone calls to 9 adults Overachieved</p>
<p>Transition Report Target 12 reports</p>	<p>100% achieved</p>
<p>Attention Builders Little Learners Target delivery to 24 children</p>	<p>Delivered 4 programmes to 27 children Overachieved</p>

<p>Play and Discover – child and parent together programme focus on communication Target 2 programmes to 12 children</p>	
<p>Parent Nurture Space Target delivery to 4 Little Learner programme parents and wider circle. Target 28 parents</p>	<p>Delivered to 49 parents Target overachieved due to demand</p>
<p>Home visits Target 80 visits with 36 families</p>	<p>81 visits achieved with 45 adults Overachieved</p>
<p>Telephone calls Target 90 phone calls with 25 adults</p>	<p>73 phone calls with 31 adults 81% achieved</p>
<p>Sensory play workshops Target 10 sessions with 28 children/adults</p>	<p>9 delivered with 42 adults</p>
<p>Internal Support Visits Target 40 visits with 20 children/adults</p>	<p>68 delivered with 41 adults and 39 children</p>
<p>Visits to Support Partners Target 4 visits to 4 children</p>	<p>Overachieved</p> <p>Delivered 4 visits to support 7 children Overachieved</p>

How well did we do it?

Staff Training

Kieran Rose Autistic Advocate - Understanding Neurodiversity and reframing autism - invoking a paradigm shift in the autism narrative with reflective practice

Curiosity Programme

Social media training

Sound for wellbeing training

Canva training

Ausome at Home

Child Protection

Kieran Rose Autistic Advocate Day 2

First Aid – 23rd October

Training with the BHSCT Emotional Health and Wellbeing team on toilet training, sleep and feeding –

Training with the BHSCT Emotional Health and Wellbeing team on the Little Hearts, Minds and Bodies programme

Child Care Partnership Conference - All different all equal: developing inclusive practice for children with additional needs

Celebrating our brain building professionals in NI

Lunchtime seminar – emotional health and wellbeing for deaf children

Elaine McGreevy (Neurodivergent affirming SLT) presented at the Early Years Network

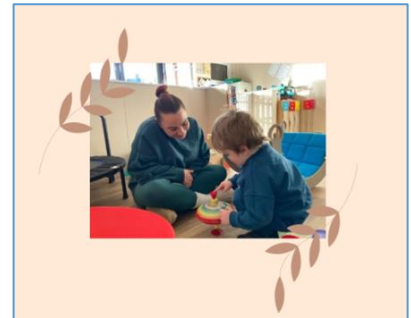
Little Learners

Little Learners continues to provide a nurturing supportive environment for two groups of 6 children. To support children to flourish, our Little Learners programme celebrates the uniqueness of each child and nurtures their development. Our environments are warm and supportive where children feel safe to explore, be themselves, respond to their innate drive to be curious and develop their own sense of identity. These spaces are carefully created and are low arousal, with calming, neutral colours, soft lighting and soft cosy furnishings with resources include natural materials, real items, loose parts - encouraging curiosity and stimulation of the senses. We provide sensory resources to meet children's sensory needs and support regulation. We recognise that parents have expertise and we work closely with them – exploring and exchanging ideas to support children's development at home and in our setting. Monthly stay and plays, home visits and parent sessions has been provided. Resources and activity ideas and information has been shared with parents, including a sensory play materials pack.



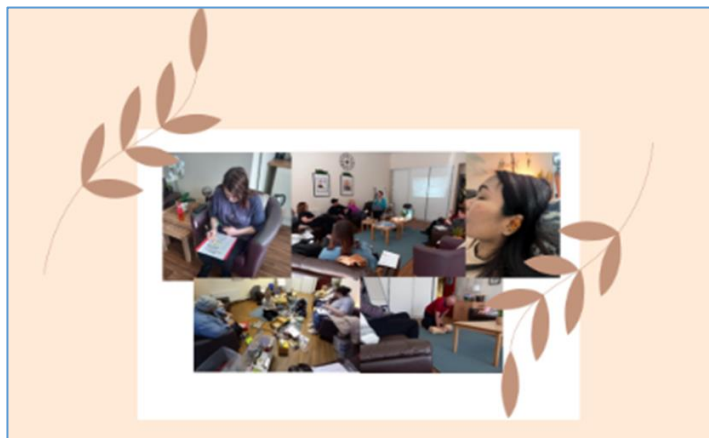
Play and Discover

Play and Discover is an impactful programme which works in partnership with parents to build their confidence, skills and knowledge in supporting their child's communication. Michelle (Sure Start SLT) and Ashlea redeveloped the Play and Discover package to include a parent workshop and reviewed our messaging to ensure it is neurodivergent affirming. Lovely connections were made between parents and children, amongst families and staff. It has been a pleasure being alongside parents on their journey of understanding and learning about their child and ways to support their communication and sensory regulation needs.



Parent Nurture Space

The Parent Nurture Space met on a monthly basis and provided a safe space for parents and carers to share experiences, get advice and resources and become part of a community to support them on their parenting journey. We had sessions on different topics throughout the year as well as time for wellbeing, relaxation, craft and chat. Sessions included a workshop on supporting autistic preschoolers to flourish by Elaine McGreevy, a neurodivergent affirming SLT, First Aid, Little Hearts Minds and Bodies programme facilitated in partnership with the BHSCT Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team, support applying for nursery settings eating, sleeping, toileting, sensory, play, supporting your child's communication, a workshop on the SEN system, the statementing process and getting children support in school facilitated by SENAC (Special Educational Needs Advice Centre) and supporting transitions to nursery.



Support for children and families

The Nurture Lead works across all our services to support neurodivergent children and children with medical needs. The Nurture Lead has developed care plans for children with medical needs and provided information, advice and support for children's development. The Nurture Lead has supported families through home visits, 1:1 sessions, telephone support and accompanying families to meetings or appointments. Practical support has included modelling strategies and providing activities and tools to support children's development and giving guidance on topics, such as regulation, sleep, sensory, toileting and communication.

The Nurture Lead has provided emotional containment and is nurturing to parents, coming alongside them on their parenting journey and helping them understand their child and recognise their child as an unique individual with their own skills, strengths and needs. Parents have been supported with any onward referrals to specialist services, given guidance when completing nursery applications and support in applying for DLA or Family Fund. The Nurture Lead has good knowledge of the processes within the EA regarding the SEN system and uses this to support parents in making requests to the Education Authority for statutory assessments for Special Educational Needs, advocating for them in any appeals and tribunals, connecting them with organisations that can help and working alongside parents to help them understand their child's statement of Special Educational Needs and empowering them in their rights regarding their child's education.

Partnership working

Being innovative and leading the way in supporting neurodivergent children and their families is a real passion within the Nurture Scheme in East Belfast Sure Start. The Nurture Lead has developed strong partnerships with a number of professionals and organisations, including Tessa Ann, a Therapeutic Sound Practitioner and specialist in using sound to support children's wellbeing and development, the BHSCT Emotional Health and Wellbeing Team, SENAC (Special Educational Needs Advice Centre), Solas, special schools and specialist provision in the East Belfast area and BHSCT therapists. The Nurture Lead sits on the Clarawood Special School Partnership, supporting the school in its work, establishing links within communities and influencing policy and practice regarding special education, early years and youth sectors. We had a student studying a Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology at Queen's University on placement with us over several months and she was such an amazing addition to the team, bringing skills, knowledge and compassion. We are keen to continue this partnership with Queen's in the future.

Sensory experiences

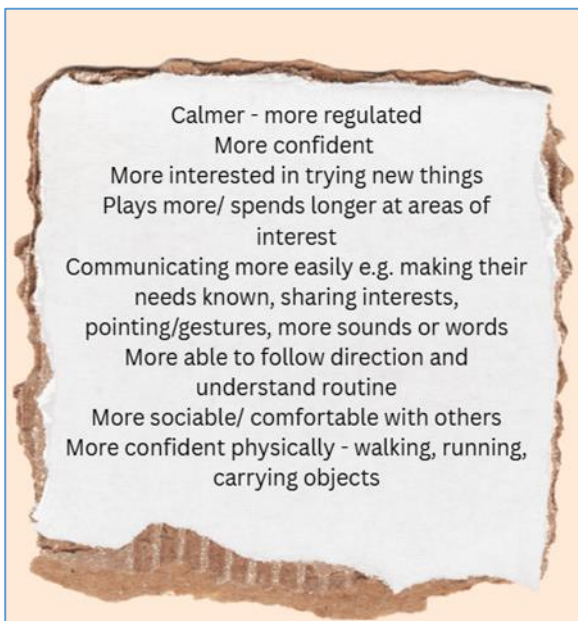
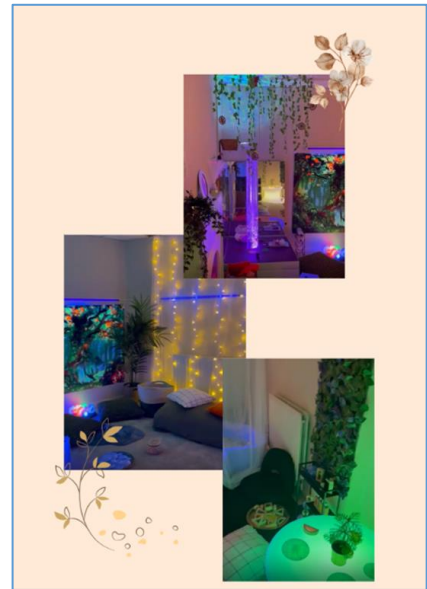
The sensory room on Albertbridge Road continues to create a calming sensory experience for the children and families.

Sensory play sessions are facilitated for groups throughout Sure Start and for community partners. These sessions encourage play experiences with different materials, show parents ideas that they can try at home and help them to understand more about how this type of play supports their child's brain development, senses, curiosity and can strengthen the bond between parent and child.

Is anyone better off?

Little Learners

Feedback from the parents survey highlighted that many parents could see changes in their child as a result of them attending Sure Start.



Little Learners staff work in partnership with CDC Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy to nurture the children's development. Across the two Little Learners programmes children have developed their confidence, curiosity, communication, social, attention and physical skills.

The CDC SLT and OT working in partnership with the Little Learners programme complete graphs to show the children's progress during the year. The blue column is the baseline completed in October and then the orange column is the children's re-assessment in May.

Quotes from Little Learners parents



The girls in little learners have been so nurturing and welcoming to my child and I am beyond grateful for them this year

Give the girls in little learners a pay rise! They are the best bunch of girls and look after the kids as if it was their own kids, the caring for each individual child was out of this world!, i know my child is gunna miss little learners and hope he gets as much care in nursery as he did in little learners. Louise, thank you for always supporting my son he's gunna miss you Shout out to Ashlea, always there to help with anything you need she helped me greatly with forms/emails to EA, Couldn't have done it without her (pay rise for her also) sure start get a nursery open!




The girls in the Little Learners group East Belfast, Louise, Melissa, Ashlea & Anna have all made a HUGE difference in our lives. More than I think they even realise. Without them my little boy wouldn't be at the knowledge he is today. I will be forever grateful for them and they will be so missed when G leaves for good. I can't thank them enough for everything they have done, for all the help and encouragement with G. Teaching him & also understanding his every need and desire when he is non verbal. These girls make a huge difference on our babies lives as well as ours as a family. I hope that Little Learners continues for the future as children really will thrive from this just like mine has.




little learners team are a fantastic group who have been great with my daughter, always helpful with any queries that we don't know much about. Also have been great with helping us to prepare for nursery in September and contacting the ea and school on our behalf. Thank you.

Quotes from other parents the Nurture Lead has been working with




Surestart has been great help for me the start and Ashlea the support worker has been fabulous, A has been awaiting her statement from the EA and Ashlea and Donna have helped me every step of the way with continuous support. Donna and the girls in sure start have been fabulous with A supporting her needs and working to help her needs also. I would highly recommend surestart and will most definitely have my expecting baby involved in surestart.



It has really helped to be able to talk. It's comforting to have had that support, it definitely helps. Ashlea has helped behind the sensory stuff, to know what ways work best for him, help me to understand him better. Sure Start has made L more sociable and has pushed me to be out of my comfort zone and come to groups.

I wanna thank you for what you have done for C and myself and always there when I need to talk ♥



Ashlea Berryman

Nurture Lead

Perinatal Team

Midwife – Christine McFarlane and Antenatal and Postnatal Support Worker – Jenny Norton

We have supported families, by home visiting, telephone and text messaging, WhatsApp groups and online support.

We have a host of weekly face to face groups offering safe spaces for community connection and information sharing. These groups are offered to antenatal and postnatal families and up to babies aged seven months.

Services accessed by family:

EBSS Midwife availability phone/home visits

Antenatal/postnatal team availability phone/home visits

Family support

Online WhatsApp groups

Antenatal workshops

Hypnobirthing

Baby group 0-6 months and 6-12 months

Summer baby day

Baby massage

Breast Start group

Signed up to Imagination library

Accessed (1:1) family support home visiting.

Antenatal Support

How much do we do?	How Well Did We Do It?
<p>Antenatal Home Visits to pregnant mothers for registration and sharing evidence based information. These visits are integral to the formative relationship building that mothers have with their babies, a set of resources are available for the family to help in preparation for the new baby's arrival. The visits also set the scene for how EBSS services can benefit their family and their child's development. Breastfeeding is discussed at each of these visits prompting conversation around normalising breastfeeding and dispelling myths. The team highlights all the benefits of breastfeeding and focuses on early relationship building and infant brain development.</p> <p>Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 visits • 50 unique mums <p>Significant Antenatal Conversations in Pregnancy.</p> <p>These conversations are often in response to the individuals' particular needs and can be in person in a setting at home or via telephone. Signposting to other services can result from these encounters.</p> <p>Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120 conversations • 80 unique mums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59 visits • 53 mums were visited <p>Each newly registered pregnant mum receives information on all our services. Antenatal Support Packages are available for mums who need extra support in pregnancy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 180 conversations • 97 unique mums

<p>Antenatal Online Support Group</p> <p>A useful way of engaging families and promoting better health and wellbeing. We use this WhatsApp groups to invite families to regular groups and other planned events. We can target a large group of families during pregnancy and following birth up to 6 months old. The families are then signposted to the next stage of our service.</p> <p>Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 Mums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 201 Mums were on the group during the year <p>Our online Pregnancy and Beyond group provides ongoing health promotion information and focuses on responsive parenting, support with and improving mental health. There is access to Solihull approach online programme in our place Understanding your child.</p> <p>Extra information about nutrition, exercising, smoking cessation, and Mental Health in Pregnancy.</p> <p>Message of the month is delivered.</p> <p>Changing Time is Chatting Time video as part of the programme.</p> <p>Offer of personal phone calls and messaging are also available.</p>
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Antenatal Yoga

We delivered these classes in evening times to best meet the needs of working women. They were well attended and individualised so that any women could avail of the practice. Chair yoga was offered during the classes for any women who felt more at ease with the extra supports. The classes are aimed at promoting women to feel empowered during their antenatal and intranatal care systems, this confidence building practice supports women to ask questions during pregnancy and birth. The improved mobility can take away the stresses and strains that often occur in pregnancy. The practice encourages upright positions and breathing techniques supporting a normal birth experience.

Breathing and movement for pregnancy and birth helps and promotes a healthier pregnancy and empowered birth. Each session promotes a deep connection to baby actively encouraging the mother to understand that her baby is getting ready to be born as their senses and brain develop while in the womb. This approach develops empathy for baby and helps the mother to get to know her baby before they are born. This promotes safety during pregnancy as tuning into the baby in the womb encourages the mother to notice their baby's movements and therefore health.

Target

- 2 groups
- 12 unique mums



Delivered by Midwife

- 2 groups achieved
- 11 attendees

92% target achieved

The evaluations of the antenatal yoga classes showed that the women were asking for more than four sessions and would have liked longer sessions. They liked the venue and the early evenings for the delivery of the classes.



**Antenatal Health Educational Workshops
(including Reg Evenings/parenting progs and hypnobirthing)**

Prior to running our antenatal health educational workshops, an antenatal evening was organised to promote registrations and opportunities to hear about SureStart services. These evenings provided invaluable opportunities to meet the EBSS Midwife and perinatal team and the wider Surestart family.

The antenatal health educational workshops that were held throughout the year were offered at various times to try and suit the needs of working families during the antenatal period. We have found that the families who attend these groups have better engagement and attend postnatal services. We use the Solihull model as a basis for deepening empathy for the developing baby in the womb. This supports connection and can lead to better outcomes, physically and emotionally.

Hypnobirthing

These classes were delivered to women and their partners, the detail of what happens in your body and the changes in your hormones are addressed more deeply in these classes. We focus on how the birth partner can support the woman during birth and teach a selection of massage techniques and use focused breath work to equip the couple to feel more able for the experience ahead of them. Even if the partner didn't attend the group work, it was useful to educate the mother so that she could teach the partner. Hypnobirthing also develops the relationship between the baby and their parents as the hypnobirthing scripts bring the family on a journey visualising a journey of a safe birth where the couple feel supported.

Target 4 Groups
25 attendees

Delivered 5 groups to 32 attendees

Breastfeeding Support for Antenatal Mums.

The engagement with registered EBSS mums and families for breastfeeding support is either face to face in their homes or at breaststart group. Breastfeeding support is also delivered via the online WhatsApp group which is an excellent online resource. The information is educational as well as practical with the aim of improving health through the benefits that breastfeeding babies brings to society as a whole. Woman and families can have home visits to have a direct support in the privacy of their own homes. We have a breast pump lending service available.

Target
6 mums

7 mums were supported before birth to breastfeed

	<p>Staff Training</p> <p>The midwife and the antenatal/postnatal support worker are registered with NMC and as part of this keep up with their CPD. Alongside this both staff members attend conferences and training to keep their skill current.</p> <p>Midwives Training</p> <p>Revalidation with NMC April 2025 Self-directed study in preparation for BFI reaccreditation 2025 relating to training of staff - ongoing. Level 3 breastfeeding practical skills assessment April 2025. Speaking up for babies 03/10/2024 First Aid 29/10/2024 Neurodiversity training E McGuire March 2024. 30 hour Yoga alliance accredited training for CPD in perinatal yoga 2024.</p> <p>Training Completed by Jen Norton.</p> <p>Revalidation obtained with NMC as Paediatric Nurse</p> <p>2/2/24 Solihull Sleepfulness 11/6/24 Speaking up for baby 21/11/24 Grief Training 29/10/24 First Aid 7/10/24 Child protection 14/4/25 Foundation Communication & Gestalt Training (SLT)</p>
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Is Anyone Better Off?

Antenatal Yoga Survey

Everyone who completed evaluations found the antenatal yoga extremely worthwhile. They loved the breathing and relaxation exercises and liked the simplicity of what was taught so that they could do it at home.

One woman commented:

“I found the yoga very helpful and thoroughly enjoyed it, I learned breathing exercises to help me through labour and loved the relaxation”

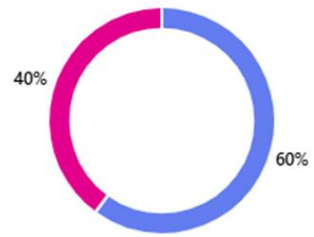
Another woman described the class “as extremely worthwhile and it benefitted my physical and mental wellbeing”

Antenatal Workshops Evaluation

All the women who attended brought their partners.
The facilitation of evening groups was valued by those attending.
Five couples responded.
There were seven couples registered and fully attended.
Two couples didn't complete the evaluation because
One couple moved to India for the birth and the other couple wasn't asked to complete the form as they had bad news during the pregnancy, the outcome was favourable though.

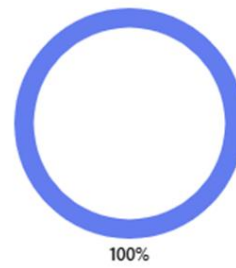
3. Did the programme meet your expectations?

- More than 3
- Completely 2
- Good enough 0
- Not at all 0



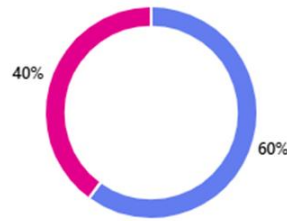
4. Did this programme help you feel more connected to your baby/ partner/ community?

- Yes 5
- No 0
- Maybe 0



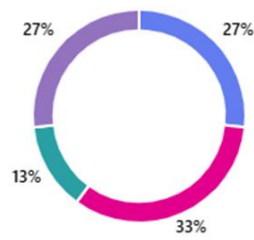
5. Did the programme meet your partners expectations?

- More than 3
- Completley 2
- Good enough 0
- Not at all 0



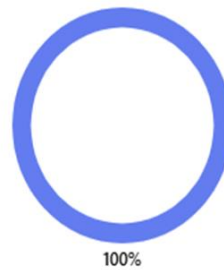
6. What did you enjoy the most? (you can tick more than one)

- Movement 4
- Breathing 5
- Massage 2
- Relaxation 4



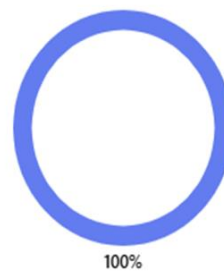
1. Did you attend hypnobirthing with you partner?

- Yes 5
- No 0
- Other 0



2. Do you think the hypnobirthing programme helped prepare you for your birth?

- Yes 5
- No 0

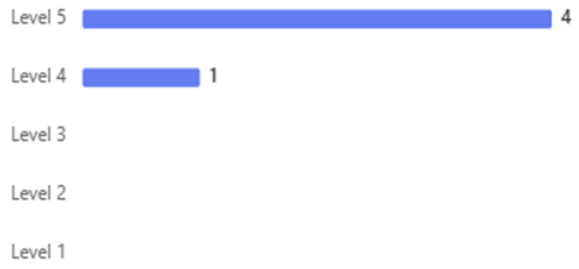


7. Please rate the venue and resources

[More details](#)

4.80

Average Rating



8. What are your thoughts on the times of the sessions? What would you preference be?

[More details](#)

- Mornings 0
- Afternoons 0
- Evenings 5
- Any 0



Postnatal Support

What Did We Do?	How Well Did We Do?
<p>Postnatal Home Visits</p> <p>These visits provide support to families from birth until six months. Our role ensures that the work we do offers support to statutory organisations providing another source of support. Our aim is to encourage engagement within the many postnatal services and signpost to the family support team if more support is required.</p> <p>Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 70 visits• 50 unique mums	<p>How Well Did We Do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 86 visits achieved• 67 mums visits <p>Parents receive a baby resource and information and often receive knitted items donated by community groups</p>
<p>Postnatal 1:1's telephone support</p> <p>Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 250 phone calls• 120 unique mums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 272 phone calls achieved• 147 mums visits
<p>Breastfeeding Support</p> <p>Home visits for breastfeeding support</p> <p>Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20 visits• 20 unique mums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 32visits achieved• 26 mums visits

<p>Meaningful Conversations/Phone Calls For breastfeeding support or any other postnatal concern. Signposted when necessary.</p> <p>Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 conversations • 25 unique mums <p>Breastfeeding Online Support</p> <p>This online service supports families with peer support connection. Many women share information on this group including ways to connect outside of EBSS services. They also support each other with practical measures. The messages are read by the midwife and if appropriate individual answers are offered on a one-to-one basis but also responsively to the whole group.</p> <p>Target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120mums to be reached with online support <p>Breastfeeding Group (BreastStart) A drop-in group that is open to registered and out of area mothers who are breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk. The group is very well attended and has various health awareness topics covered from within the service, including S&L and the Nurturing service. Health promotion services including health screening PHA WRA and EBDCA regularly attend group. We have had a sensory sound bath for mums and babies and Employers for childcare to support with finances available and Belfast City Council for home safety.</p> <p>Target 40 mums</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57 conversations achieved • 34 mums received a phone call <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 130 mums received online support <p>A poll asked if the WhatsApp group was useful. All respondents agreed, yes it was useful for information and connection.</p> <p>A range of information is posted to inform the group.</p> <p>There is access for immediate support via other users as well as the midwife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 mums attended throughout the year <p>BreastStart promotes and informs healthy starts and relationship building between baby and parents. Promotes peer support and friendship forming outside group. A swim group has formed from this, and the groups meet outside of BreastStart, it is an inclusive group.</p> <p>Breastfeeding audits for BFI ensure that meeting the UNICEF standards for the promotion of responsive feeding.</p> <p>10 parents and 10 staff were audited.</p>
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Training by Midwife on BFI for staff completed.

Antenatal invitation to come along to group.

From birth to the end of breastfeeding experience, this group supports families, and older children are welcomed offering a whole family experience.

The group hosts guests from outside the organisation covering a range of information ranging from: weaning, home safety, healthy relationships, financial support, health promotion. The speech and language team and additional needs team that compliment learning within the group offer regular contributions.

Breastfeeding mothers supported to maximize breastfeeding by:
 one to one support at groups,
 staff listening to mothers' experiences and concerns,
 observations of feeding,
 demonstrations of practical skills using appropriate props, videos and literature. Infant feeding is intragal to the support families are offered. Mothers referred to Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) specialist breastfeeding support when appropriate as an extra support.

The staff and mothers are audited yearly for UNICEF's Baby friendly initiative for which EBSS is leading the four teams to reaccreditation in June 2025.

There has been much preparation throughout the year to educate the families and our staff to ensure all babies get the best start in life. Families who choose to breastfeed or formula feed are both offered equal and unbiased support. The coordination between the four Sure starts who jointly apply for reaccreditation required much collaboration and planning. As a team we ensured that all the services we offer during the year continued.

Preparation for UNICEF BFI reaccreditation.

East Belfast SureStart was selected to lead the process for attaining baby friendly status. Four Belfast sure starts make up one team for assessment in June 2025.

Baby Club 0 - 6 Months

Target:

- 60 mums and Babies
- Weekly sessions



- 76 mums attended

Connecting through song and early speech and language development. Championing responsive parenting, bonding and attachment. Peer support.

The baby club continues to be a relaxing, drop-in group where parents and care givers can come with their babies, find a welcoming space to meet other families, talk about day-to-day life and share the high and lows of parenthood. It's a delight to see friendships forged in this room and cemented as families go further on their Surestart journey together.

The baby club includes in at the beginning of each term first aid training for parents. One parent commented

"The first aid training is really invaluable, its an informal way I can learn really useful life skills!"

The Perinatal team also invited speakers from **EBCDA, Employers for Childcare, Belfast City Council & the Hospital Trust, Paediatric Dietician.**

Baby Club families enjoyed regular input from the Nurture team bringing sensory opportunities for parent and babies to explore. The speech and Language team have also regularly participated in the group . The **Connect With Me** programmes core messages have been embedded at Baby Club. The programme was implemented using the Whatsapp group and face to face group to ensure

<p>Baby Massage</p> <p>Delivered by Perinatal team and Claire from Happy Hatchlings.</p> <p>Target 4 groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 mums and babies  <p>Baby Yoga</p> <p>Target 2 groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 mums and babies <p>Health and Wellbeing workshops Postnatal</p>	<p>all the information could be readily accessible.</p> <p>At the heart of baby club is the intentional inclusion of song and rhyme and stories and the importance of connecting with baby through these mediums.</p> <p>Baby Club sees intentional song & Rhyme involvement in weekly groups and encouraging parents to make up songs and have a go.</p> <p>Regular baby massage courses have been organised for families throughout the year. Families continue to enjoy learning the techniques taught through the medium of song and rhyme, so again the importance of connecting with baby through this medium is reiterated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 group delivered • 34 mums and babies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 groups • 22 adults with babies attend this event
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<p>Invitational sessions were held for mums to come along and enjoy a relaxed time having time out together doing an easy craft whilst their little ones had time in the company of the early years team. this afforded mums some well earned opportunities to spend time investing their own health and well-being. one parent commented “ What a wonderful time, just chatting together with other mums doing something creative, I Loved it”</p> <p>Carew summer Scheme Baby day July 2024</p>	<p>4 Mums received a bespoke workshop on mental health</p> <p>25 parents supported with practical needs:-</p> <p>Families were allocated Tesco Token and Electricity vouchers and Save The Children Grants where there was family need. Families were referred to local foodbanks or/and given food parcels when in need.</p> <p>Bookstart book packages were distributed to many new postnatal mothers at home visits</p> <p>Staff provided mothers with containment and reciprocity whilst offering postnatal support.</p> <p>Mothers informed of local support services/groups, telephone helplines and reputable on-line services. We gather case studies to evidence the outcomes for families.</p> <p>User feedback from audits, written evaluations, conversations and attendances to inform future practice.</p>
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Is Anyone Better Off?

Breastfeeding Support Group

One mother said "Breast start gives lots of support in early parenthood, very informative sessions and resources, I have made friends for life"

Another mother said "Excellent, one of the best rooms in East Belfast"

About the venue "I like the layout of people sitting together, the group includes people from lots of different backgrounds and encourages conversation"

Baby massage

One parent commented "*The baby massage course helped me access Surestart in a gentle way that also helped me make new friends*".

Another said, "*I was nervous coming to baby to massage as I had never been to any baby groups before, but I immediately felt comfortable. I really enjoyed coming each week*".

Baby Club

One parent commented "*Baby club is a lovely gentle, home from home space to come to. I really enjoy coming along and meeting others.*"

Another said "*I enjoy the different speakers and information shared at the group*".

Baby Yoga

One parent commented "*I found that the baby yoga was very calming for my baby*"

Another comment was that "*the baby yoga class has offered a lovely opportunity to connect with him*"

Containment and Reciprocity is witnessed by staff between parents and babies, during group sessions and home visits.

Responsive feeding leading to increased bonding and attachment between mothers and babies. Results from UNICEF BFI yearly audits provides evidence.

All our services provide connection between mums who are often isolated. Many mums comment on the benefit of that and interaction on the Breastfeeding online group makes this evident. There is also evidence that the mums connect outside the group socially meaning that they building their own networks of support.

Christine McFarlane – Community Midwife Jenny Norton – Perinatal Support

Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Support

The Speech, Language and Communication model for Sure Start continues to be Universal, Targeted and Specialist intervention. The support provided to East Belfast Sure Start over this academic year is evidenced throughout this report.



The SLT post is a job share between Rebecca Carey (24.25 hours) & Michelle Maguire (17 hours).

SLC Outcomes- April 24 – March 25

How much did we do?

655 Collaborative conversations
 413 with Sure Start staff
 164 with parents
 78 with others, including community/health services
This is a 15% increase from last year

SLC support in Developmental Programme for 2–3-year-olds:

Centre-based visits providing parents with advice around child’s SLC – 6 planned, 10 completed

35 setting visits to support staff

Telephone based support for parents
 6 planned with 6 unique adults, 15 completed with 9 unique adults

How well did we do it?

A huge part of SLC role is to be available for consultation, conversations and advice. Sure Start staff and parents continue to contact the SLT to discuss ideas and ask for advice regarding the children’s development. This happens regularly and often does not require a SLC visit where we meet the child. We also have collaborative conversations with health visitors and core SLTs to discuss the child’s care.

Target overachieved (166%)

In addition to parent support within the DP24-3Yos the SLT will visit settings and provide staff with advice around a communication friendly environment and supporting all children’s SLC needs. Setting visits where the parents aren’t present and are primarily to support the staff are a large part of the SLT role however are not recorded on the database.

Target achieved (150%)

<p>X10 educational workshops: X2 SLC workshops for parents in each programme at the beginning and end of year to provide information around 'Chat with me' and 'Chat with me about preschool'</p> <p>X5 'SLC drop ins' to parent stay and play session</p> <p>All families received x3 Chat with me books- in September, the Christmas book and the moving to Preschool book.</p> <p>54 children supported with their transition to nursery/preschool</p> <p>SLC screening: All children attending the DP42YO are screened at the beginning and end of the year to help identify children who need support and measure progress. Most children are screened using the Wellcomm and children who use English as an additional language are screened using the Bilingual language profile</p> <p><u>SLC support in core services including child development sessions/Early years/community partner groups:</u></p> <p>34 Home visits completed to support SLC skills in the home environment (50 visits planned)</p>	<p>Target achieved (workshops offered and delivered) 73% attendance – you would rarely expect full attendance for various reasons. We provide digital resources to try and reach the parents who do not attend.</p> <p>We started these more informal sessions to allow for more relationship building and conversations with parents around their children's SLC needs. 83% attendance</p> <p>48 families received Chat with me book series The children attending Little explorers did not receive these resources- their support was more tailored to their developmental needs.</p> <p>SLT supported staff with transition reports and ensures children who require additional support are signposted to appropriate services in addition to the 'Chat with me about preschool' sessions for parents</p> <p>100% of children attending screened using an SLC outcomes measuring tool.</p> <p>68% achieved- The SLT doesn't complete all necessary home visits and will often support the family support worker who is most proximal to the family to incorporate SLC support into their home visits. The number of families seeking home support across the board has reduced this year. The SLT is more likely to meet with the parent in a setting they are attending in SureStart or invite them to an appropriate group to meet with them. In addition, it is worth noting that family support workers will often seek advice from the nurture lead who is more proximal to the families they are</p>
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<p>19 centre-based visits to provide SLC support to parents for children attending child development programmes, including community partner groups</p>	<p>supporting and hence not include SLT in visit support/target stats.</p> <p>Target achieved (190%)</p>
<p>18 settings visits to support staff</p>	<p>As above, the SLT will visit settings and provide staff with advice around a communication friendly environment and supporting all children's SLC needs.</p>
<p>22 Telephone based support for parents</p>	<p>Target achieved (110%)</p>
<p>15 'SLC Drop in' events including at child development sessions, parent and toddler groups and universal information events (e.g. play days)</p>	<p>Target achieved (107%) This was a new target to capture that the SLTs are trying to increase their presence at events and SureStart groups in order to build relationships with parents and provide general speech, language and communication advice and universal messaging.</p>
<p>66 children supported with their transition to nursery school</p>	<p>All families with children moving on to nursery school who were attending community partner groups or child development sessions received 'Chat with me about preschool' book and were offered educational workshop on this topic.</p>
<p>X 10 Educational workshops for parents delivered in child development sessions, including community partner groups</p>	<p>Target achieved -48 attendances</p>
<p><u>SLC support in Antenatal/baby services:</u></p>	
<p>2 antenatal evenings</p>	<p>37 parents attending</p>
<p>X8 educational workshops delivered in Baby club/café and Breast feeding support group</p>	<p>Target achieved- 50 attendances</p>
<p>X1 visit to Tullcarnet baby club in collaboration with Barnardos</p>	<p>6 families – not yet registered with Surestart</p>
<p><u>SLC support in Additional needs groups:</u></p>	
<p>SLT facilitated the play and discover groups alongside the Nurture Lead (previously known as additional needs support worker) or Little Learners supervisor</p>	<p>See Nurture Scheme (additional needs) for stats.</p>

Referrals made by SLT

15 Speech and language

- 1 Child development clinic
- 9 Autism Assessment services
- 3 Other allied health professionals
- 2 Educational Psychology

Staff Training

- Hanen Learning Language and Loving it Intensive interaction
- Hanen Teacher Talk (adapted for family support)
- Gestalt language Development

Children are referred to other services in a timely manner when additional support is required. Siilar to last year, the number of referrals to other services has reduced, despite the needs of the children and families remaining high. There may a few reasons for this:

- Often other staff members will liaise with the health visitor (someone already involved with the family) who then completes the required referrals instead of requesting the SureStart SLTs input.
- Parents can also self-refer to community SLT services which is a pathway that is being used more frequently.
- Children have often already been referred to SLT when they register with SureStart.
- The criteria to access services such as the Child Development Clinic and Educational Psychology has changed which has reduced the number of children who meet the criteria for the services now.

Number trained:

- 5
- 4
- 7
- 30

Is anyone better off as a result?

Supporting parents and children

90 % of parents report changes in their child's SLC development as a result of attending Sure Start

(e.g. calmer/more regulated, more able to follow instructions, communicating more easily, spending longer at activities etc)

“Communicating more easily” was the highest response with 63%

98% of parents report that they have made changes to their behaviour to support their child's SLC development (e.g. share more books, follow my child's lead, change how I inter/communicate with them, reduce screen time etc)

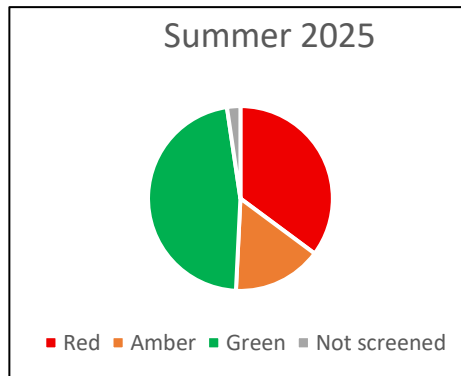
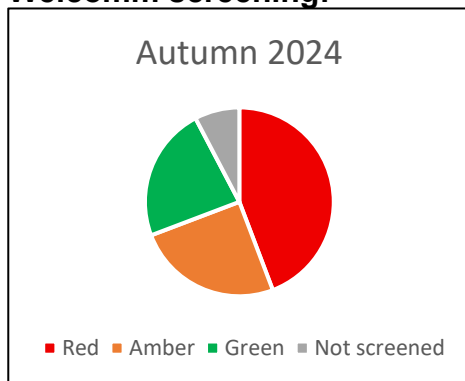
Two highest responses were “follow my child's lead” and “change how I interact/communicate with me child” with 63% and 51% respectively

Sample feedback:

"She has more interest with her toys more now and trying more sounds etc"
"Learnt loads (about how) to interact in a lot of fun ways"
"It gives your child more confidence"
"(I'm) Interacting more with songs and pretend play"

SLC screening of the children attending the DP42-3YOs and Little Explorers at the beginning and end of the year showed the following results:

Welcomm screening:



Red indicates a high level of SLC need

Amber indicates moderate SLC needs

Green suggests the child's SLC is typically developing.

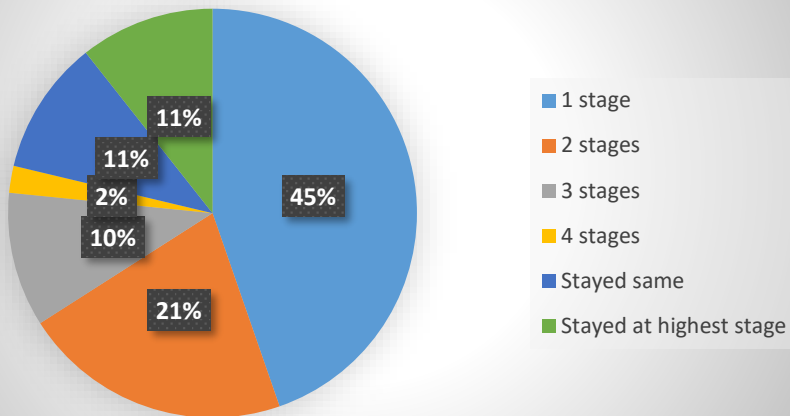
Positive outcomes could be seen in Summer 2025, with more children scoring green and a decrease in the number of children scoring red. All children requiring additional support were signposted to appropriate services. The children who weren't screened had either left the setting or their progress was monitored using the Bilingual screening tool.

Bilingual Language Profile (screening for EAL children):

Of the 4 bilingual children attending the settings only 1 child attended for the whole year enabling pre and post screening. This child made progress in all areas of SLC.

There are various factors that can affect the child's score in the Wellcomm such as their attention and listening skills and their communication style, and so we also use the Hanen Language Stages as a way of measuring the children's progress. Hanen Language stages identify the very early stages of communication (e.g. not sending intentional messages to others), to the later stages (where children can hold a conversation with others)

Progress in Hanen Stages



90% of children made or maintained progress in their expressive language skills

Supporting staff/ training

What is different about the way you are interacting with the children now?

“Observing waiting and listening”

“Using phrases/comments instead of asking questions”

“Children learn at different levels of play/development so ensure you adapt your approach to the certain child”

What is different about the way you offer support to parents now?

“I now provide more information”

“I have helpful resources to reinforce our conversations”

What have you noticed about how children respond when you interact in this way?

“They are more interested and the length of the play is extended”

”More engaged”

“He usually gets up and leaves but now he stays and plays alongside me”

Universal Support

SLC messaging is weaved through all aspects of Sure Start service delivery. The SLT team has continued to upskill staff through training, modelling in practice and discussions and has increased their presence at events where they can meet parents and be available for both individual conversations as well as universal messaging. Some of our key universal messaging initiatives this year have been:

#yourwordsworkwonders #anytimeischattingtime
#changing time is chatting time

- Chatting time initiative
- SureStart Message of the month
- Connecting through Song- including short videos to share with parents with tips on how to connect and support early development through song.
- Increase awareness of baby brain development- staff upskilling, parent workshops, SLC information in antenatal/baby groups, Emer Maguire Brain development videos



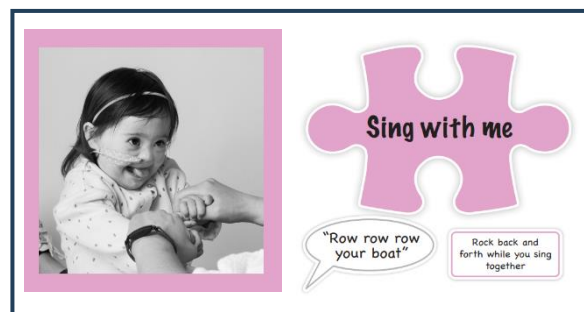
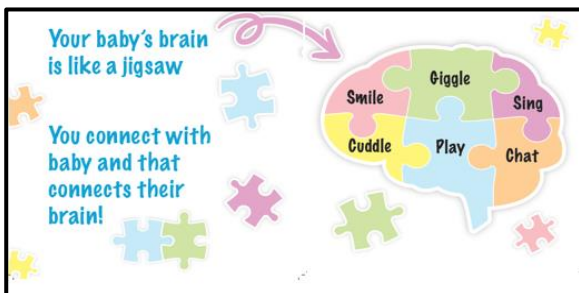
Connect with Me

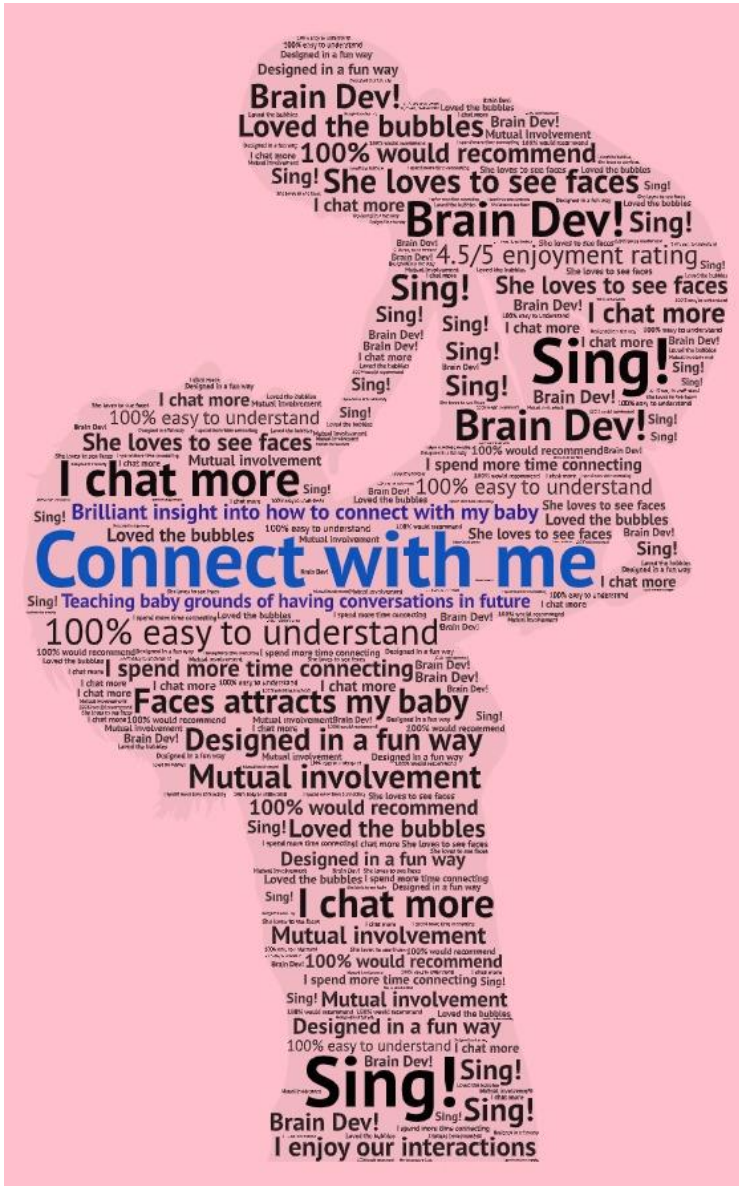
Following the success of the 'Chat with me' books, a gap was acknowledged in our resources for families with children ages 0-18 months. The 'Connect with me' book and resource package was developed in partnership with the SLT team, Eastside ELC and Save the Children, with support and funding from the PHA and Belfast HSCT Sure Start SLT team.

The aim of the book is to promote parent-child connection and baby brain development. Sample pages:

The book production was completed last year, so this year has been spent promoting it, sharing the messaging with parents and staff in East Belfast, and gathering feedback.

Some of the feedback gathered:





The Connect with me book and digital resources were formally launched in East Belfast SureStart in November 2024 and books were distributed across all 38 NI Surestart areas, funded by the PHA.



For the remainder of the year, we developed a training session to enable Sure Start staff and other professionals to become familiar with the resource package and feel confident delivering 'Connect with me' within their work with families. We also developed a 4-week

programme to deliver with families. Our aim is to deliver these and continue upskilling staff to do so next year.

Targeted Support

Programme Delivery: SLT supported the delivery of various programmes alongside other Sure Start staff, including antenatal and baby groups and play and discover programmes. The aim of joint delivery with the antenatal, family support and early years teams is to build capacity within the teams and continue to model and weave messaging regarding brain development and supporting communication development into the delivery of all programmes.

Work with Early Years staff: In addition to staff training, SLT continued to support the Early Years team on a needs led basis, providing advice and support regarding whole groups (e.g. ways to adapt the environment) and individual children (e.g. specific ways to support each child's SLC needs). This support was offered to our partners in Ballybeen, Bloomfield, First Steps and Short Strand as well as our Sure Start groups. All children attending the DP42-3YOs and Carew are screened at the beginning and end of the year, using either the Wellcomm and Hanen language stages or the Bilingual screening tool. This is a helpful process to identify children's needs, and monitor progress. The SLT oversees this and supports staff on goal setting and planning (results detailed above.)

Work with the family support team: The family support team play a huge role in supporting children's SLC skills in the home environment and in their groups. SLT continues to be available to discuss cases and provide advice as required. This year, the family support team completed the Hanen Teacher Talk training, increasing their knowledge of how to support SLC development.

Work with parents: We recognise that the person who has a strong relationship with the family is the person best placed to support our parents, which is why most of the SLT's work focuses on capacity building. However, when it is appropriate, the SLT provides advice and support to parents via phone calls and face to face visits. They have also been supported through the SLT-led programmes and educational workshops.

Specialist Support

The capacity building model helps to ensure that all children and families attending SureStart receive universal SLC information and attend communication friendly settings. It also ensures staff have knowledge about SLC development to help with early identification of children who need higher levels of support. This year we made 30 referrals to Specialist services. The SLT maintains strong links with health visitors and speech and language therapy teams, often providing relevant information to support their referrals to services.

Play and discover: This group provides support to children and their parents who require high levels of support particularly around their communication. It has provided invaluable support to families, ensuring they have been referred to the correct services and/or

offering advice and support to families whilst on long waiting lists. Further details of this programme can be found in the Additional Needs section of the report.



Hopes and priorities for next year include

- ❖ Continue to share 'Connect with me' messaging far and wide
 - Deliver Connect with me training
 - Start Connect with me programmes in EBSS groups
- ❖ With new staff in post, it will be important to spend time continuing to embed SLC practices into all settings
- ❖ Continue training and upskilling as team changes and evolves.

Rebecca Carey and Michelle Maguire
Sure Start Speech and Language Therapists

Community Partner Reports

First Steps Child Development Programme Report

First Steps hosted 4 children in their Child Development programme 2024/2025.

We had our photographer visit in **January**. Like we do every year we made up our little pretend photo booth set up and props to get the children prepared for our visit that week. We practiced our best smiles and used our props, pretend cameras and had great fun! The children had great interactions with their peers, chatted and laughed away and their silly hats etc. The visit went great, and families pleased with their photos.

We also had our January Stay and Play. The children enjoyed having their parents/carers in their classroom and showed them their favorite toys and areas to play at.

In **February** we had our Valentines themed craft and valentines Party! We decorated our playroom in love hearts and valentines themed decorations and made a card for our loved one of choice. We made little biscuits, put icing on them and added some pink and red sprinkles! Yum! We also had our stay and play for this month. We enjoyed some physical play in our large hall and the children got to play with their parents/carers with plenty of space to enjoy some run around and fun!

In **March** we had our Stay and Play Sensory visit with Ashlea. We put the invite out to the other parents too if they would like to attend and we ended up with a good wee number. It was a great, enjoyable day! Ashlea came with loads of different textures and items that the children really got involved with and enjoyed making plenty of mess! They played with their peers and also their parents/carers. Ashlea provided a handout for each parent on how they can make some of the home-made sensory items too. The parents told us after how much they and their child loved this visit.

In **April** we had an Easter Bunny visit for the Children, and they loved this, the easter bunny even brought some easter eggs for the children as a treat! We decorated our room in Easter themed decorations and did Plenty of Easter crafts, Easter themed tuff tray activities too. We had our stay and play for this month, and we had an Egg hunt in our large hall! The children did great searching about for their eggs and treat and so did the parents!

In **May** we had Lisa from EBAIC to give a little advice to our parents on whatever they needed. We then enjoyed our stay and play session at the end of this month. The children enjoyed showing their parents carers around our playroom and having some valuable one to one time with them. Also, staff being there to answer anything that the parents wanted to ask etc.

Finally, **June** our final month. We had our Teddy Toddle where we 'Toddled' around outside grounds with their teddy of soft toy that they brought to playgroup for the day, we

had music and bubbles too! After we enjoyed a wee outdoor party with yummy fresh fruit and snack followed by some yummy ice pops and some outdoor games!

We had our Transition visit with Michelle from Sure Start which is so beneficial to our parents giving them the chance to get tips and advice on any worries they may have.

We had a First Aid parenting program visit booked with Ross from our local Hospital and ambulance service who was going to provide an information session around choking and first aid, but we had to cancel last minute as the parents cancelled. Hoping we can provide this again next term.

We had our last home visit this month also which went great and all good positive feedback and chats about the children progress and next transition.

We had our last day party and graduation! With a visit from the ice cream van! It was a wonderful year, and we as a staff team saw so much progress with these little ones with potty training and their speech and language and confidence.

We had our open day/induction workshop with all our new starts for term 2025/2026 we

Target	Sessio ns	Unique No of Children	Unique No of adults	April to June Quarter 1	Percentage Achievement
Child Development Programme Attendance	151	9	9	142/151 sessions Unique Children 9/9	94%
Home Visits	13	9	9	13/9	100%
Parent and Child Together	10	9	9	8/10 Unique children 5/5 Unique adults 5/5	100% 100% 100%
Parenting Programme	2		9	2/2 4/9	100% 44%
Induction	1	4		1/1	100%

Nicole McKibbin – Leader

First Steps Child Development Programme

Short Strand Child Development Programme Report

Short Strand Community Development Programme is housed in Short Strand Community Centre. We work in partnership with East Belfast Sure start to provide 12 places for children aged over 2 years and 10 months. Attendance is excellent and the programme provides quality early years play provision and training for early year's students.

We have three core workers consisting of a leader and two assistants and the group is also supported by trainees, volunteers and bank staff. We operate a key worker system and our priority during the settling in period is the emotional wellbeing of the children. We have a strong, supportive relationship with parents and promote parental involvement from the beginning by creating a warm, friendly, environment and inviting parents to attend Stay and Plays sessions during the year and training.

July/August 2024

Interest forms were successfully distributed and returned from prospect families enabling us to begin the enrolment process and assess demand for this programme. Comprehensive home visits were conducted to facilitate the transition into the programme and to establish meaningful connections with families. During these visits parents received detailed information about our child development programme, including goals, daily routines and developmental expectations.

A dedicated induction morning was organised to familiarise children and families into the programme environment. The session helped ease transition into the programme and allowed families to meet staff and explore the facilities. Each child received a book, a personalised name symbol featuring the first letter of their name. Designated spaces identified for personal belongings (coats and bags). These individual touches helped to create a sense of ownership and belonging whilst supporting early literacy and organisational skills developed. Parents were able to purchase uniforms and the children received a treat bag on way out.

September 2024

In September, we welcomed new children into our young child development program. During this settling-in period, the children adjusted well, supported by our dedicated staff. Additionally, we implemented a healthy eating program, which received positive feedback and high participation. Staff actively engaged the children in

activities that promoted healthy habits, fostering a supportive and nurturing environment.

October 2024

We hosted a Halloween party that was well attended by both children and parents. The parents participated in a workshop where they made Halloween cupcakes and sweet treats. The children enjoyed delicious biscuits, and we prepared party bags for everyone. After the preparations, we opened the party, creating a festive atmosphere where everyone had a wonderful time celebrating together.

November 2024

As we approach the end of November, we're excited to reflect on our child development program. This month, we implemented a special initiative where we created a developmental pack for the children. This provided a wonderful opportunity for parents to gain valuable insights into their children's growth and learning experiences. The engagement and feedback from parents have been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the importance of collaboration in supporting our children's development.

December 2024

In December, our child development program featured several exciting parent engagement activities. One highlight was the "Parent and Child Snowman" project, where parents and children worked together to create festive snowmen. We also hosted a delightful Christmas party, where children dressed up in festive attire and sang Christmas songs. Santa made a special appearance, and each child received a present, adding to the joy of the celebration. To wrap up the festivities, we provided party bags for all the children. Overall, it was a wonderful time filled with laughter and holiday spirit!

January 2025

In January, our child development program welcomed students from Queen's University who were on placement with us. They implemented a dental health program, providing each child with a toothbrush and toothpaste to promote good oral hygiene. Parents also received educational materials on maintaining healthy dental habits. Additionally, we offered a yoga taster session for parents, encouraging wellness and relaxation. This initiative not only supported children's health but also engaged families in healthy lifestyle practices.

February 2025

In February, our child development program focused on meaningful engagement with families through home visits, where staff updated parents on their child's progress. We also hosted a parenting program centred around Valentine crafts, allowing parents and children to create together. Additionally, we collaborated with EBCDA for a one-day "Take/Five" program, enhancing our offerings and supporting children's development. These activities reflect our commitment to fostering strong connections between home and our program.

March 2025

On March 7th, we celebrated World Book Day with an engaging event for our children and their families. All the children came dressed in their favourite costumes, showcasing their creativity and enthusiasm for reading. Parents were invited to join us for a special story time, fostering a love for books and storytelling. Each child received a book to take home, promoting literacy and encouraging reading at an early age. In addition to World Book Day, we also celebrated Saint Patrick's Day with a fun-filled day at the local community centre. This event attracted many parents and children, creating a vibrant atmosphere of community spirit and joy. Activities included themed games and crafts, bringing everyone together to celebrate. Both events were successful in promoting community engagement and enhancing the children's developmental experiences through interactive learning and fun.

April 2025

In April, our program hosted Easter hat-making classes for both parents and children. This creative activity fostered bonding and engagement, as families worked together to create beautiful Easter-themed crafts. The session was filled with friendly competition among parents, adding an exciting element to the fun. Following the crafting classes, we held a lively Easter party for all participants. The event featured music and dance led by Jo Jingles, creating a festive atmosphere that encouraged everyone to join in the fun. Children proudly showcased their artwork, and the overall spirit of celebration made it a memorable day for families.

May 2025

On May 21st, our program hosted a crafting session focused on creating meaningful projects for both parents and children. This activity highlighted the benefits of collaborative crafting, enhancing the parent-child bond and promoting creativity. Parents particularly enjoyed the messy play aspect of the session, allowing children to explore their creativity in a hands-on environment.

Messy play is known to aid in sensory development and fine motor skills, providing valuable learning experiences for young children.

Additionally, we underwent an inspection of the child development program this month, and we are pleased to report that the results were excellent. This reflects the hard work and dedication of our staff in providing quality care and education for the children.

June 2025

In June, we completed the necessary transition forms for our incoming beginners starting in September. This process involved close collaboration with parents to ensure a smooth transition for their children. Mrs. Donnelly from Saint Matthews Nursery School facilitated updates, helping parents understand what to expect as their children move into the next phase of their education.

We also held a graduation ceremony for the class of 2025, marking an important milestone for our children. The event was well-attended by parents, grandparents, and family members, creating a lively and supportive atmosphere. While it was a bit stressful coordinating such a large gathering, the joy and pride in celebrating the children's achievements made it all worthwhile.

Parent & Toddler Group

Our mother and toddler program, held in partnership with East Belfast Sure Start, has become a cherished part of our community. Meeting every Thursday morning at the Short Strand Community Centre, the program provides a welcoming space for parents and their little ones to come together, share experiences, and build connections.

The sessions are well-attended, primarily by mothers, creating a supportive environment where they can engage with one another while their toddlers play and learn. This vibrant atmosphere encourages the sharing of parenting tips, fostering friendships, and creating a strong network of support among local families.

Each week, we organize fun activities tailored to the developmental needs of toddlers, including arts and crafts, music, and interactive games. These activities not only stimulate the children but also provide opportunities for parents to bond with their little ones in a joyful setting.

The partnership with East Belfast Sure Start enhances our program's offerings, allowing us to tap into valuable resources and expertise. Overall, our mother and toddler program is

more than just a weekly gathering; it's a vital support system that nurtures both children and parents, strengthening the fabric of our community.

Training

This year, our child development program has made significant strides in enhancing our team's skills and knowledge. We are proud to announce that our training program has successfully seen the completion of Level Two in Early Years Development. This achievement reflects our commitment to providing high-quality support for the children in our care.

Julie, one of our dedicated after-school club support workers, has also completed her Level Three training. Her enhanced qualifications will further enrich our program, as she is prepared to contribute to the development initiatives as needed. Julie's commitment to professional growth exemplifies the dedication we foster within our team.

Additionally, all staff members have updated their first aid training, ensuring that we maintain a safe environment for the children. This training is vital, as it equips our staff with the necessary skills to respond effectively in emergencies.

Overall, these training accomplishments not only enhance our program's quality but also demonstrate our ongoing commitment to professional development and child safety. We believe that investing in our staff directly benefits the children and families we serve, creating a positive impact in our community.

What did we do?			How well did we do it?	
Target		Unique No of Children/Unique No of adults	Monitoring	Percentage Achievement
Child Development Programme	152	24 children	Sessions	90%
			137/152 sessions	
			Unique children	100%
			26/24 children attending	
Induction Workshop	1	12 children	1 delivered	75%
		12 adults	9/12 children	
			11/12 adults	92%
Home Visits	36	24 children	38/36	100%
		24 adults	24 children	
			24 adults	
Stay and Play	10	24 children	Sessions	

		24 adults	9/10 sessions Unique Adults 23/24 Unique Children 23/24	100% 96% 96%
Parenting Programme	4	24 adults	¾ sessions 23/24 adults	96%
Parent and Toddlers	38	32 children 25 adults	Sessions Unique children 33/32 children Unique adults 25/25 adults	100% 100%

Agnes McGinley

Short Strand Community Association

Bloomfield Community Association Report

Project Outcomes	
How much did we do?	How Well Did We Do It?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 1:1 support for at least 8 children with additional needs on an ongoing basis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 Individual Supports • 20 Unique Children • Child Development Sessions x 4 mornings per week during term time for 20 unique children over two intakes • Induction Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 workshop • 8 children • Transitions Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 workshop • 12 children • Provide 2 programmes per year for parents e.g. Solihull and Wellbeing/Advice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 238 Achieved • 41 Unique Children <p>95% target achieved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 Unique Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 workshop • 6 children attended <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 workshop • 11 children attended <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 families attended

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 60 Home Visits to 20 families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 Achieved • 15 Unique Adults <p>67% achieved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 20 1:1 telephone support sessions to 10 families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 calls • 8 adults <p>90% achieved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 20 Parent and Child together sessions to 20 families ages 0-4 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 Session delivered • 30 families attended <p>Target achieved</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Days • 12 days • 30 families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 days delivered • 40 families attended

How well do we do it?

At Bloomfield we continue to provide a vital service for families in the Bloomfield area. We have supported families with many issues e.g. SEN needs, medical needs, mental health issues & needs, financial difficulties, support including form filling, with gas and electric, referral to food banks and general support and signposting. I feel that at times my role can offer the tiniest bit of support that can really help families. Within my work in Bloomfield Playgroup, I work closely with parents and staff to ensure guidance and support on areas such as behaviour, speech development and toilet training. I have supported quite a few families who are new to Northern Ireland to help with their child/children enrolled in nurseries or schools. Families are very thankful for the support and guidance.

Jack as an Early Years practitioner continues to work in the Playgroup delivering high quality child development using his training in Solihull, Hanen & Foundations training. This has allowed him to make a significant difference to each child taking onboard their individual learning styles and adapting our play environment to meet and address those needs to ensure continual growth and development.

I have been continuing with my "Getting to Know You" programme in the Bloomfield area and have regular families that attend alongside new families. I delivered sensory play sessions which is are always popular and the kids love it, I have done songs and rhyme sessions and had Jo Jingles in for some sessions to support this. Physical play sessions which Tiny Kicks assisted me with it was great to be able to do these sessions outdoors and see parents engaging so well with their child. I also done general play and story sessions.

Parents comment: I like these sessions as we can choose what to do with our child and it can be more relaxed and chilled session.

During the facilitation of these sessions, I have seen families improve their relationship with their children and have help to demonstrate how to use different techniques on how to deal with different situations. I have made great connections with many families.

During this year I have been delighted to contact the new minister in St Donards Church. The Reverend Jan Stevenson has been appointed as the new minister and comes to the area with a lot of community development experience from working in many disadvantaged areas. Reverend Jan is keen to work closely with our team in Bloomfield to help and support each other to provide better outcomes for children and families.

Recent Events

There are so many events ran at different times throughout the year that some families can just not afford especially if they have more than one child. We recognised this at Bloomfield and want to help families make memories with their children.

With this in mind, we ran a Pumpkin patch and a drive-in cinema . Over 100 families attended. It was a great turn out and a huge success. Families were so grateful for this opportunity.

Last Christmas I was able to take all the families on a Christmas experience to The Ark Farm. Again, most of these families couldn't have afforded to do this. To see the parents and children's faces was just amazing & it made me feel so happy I could offer them this experience. We celebrated Happiness Day by having families together for activities and lunch. We done art and crafts and planting the families all enjoyed getting to take home what they planted! We had our annual duck race which was a great success. We had a trip in June alongside our playgroup to Hillsborough Park the families all enjoyed it. Some said they enjoyed chatting to other parents and finding out more about the Playgroup.

We had family fun days and events on throughout the year which all families came to. Again, this Summer we have been able to continue with family trips and it's great to see the Parents interacting with their child and other parents. We have been able to offer these families to join our Bloomfield Family Programme which took place during summer. We went to Belfast Zoo, The Ark Farm, Hillsborough Forest Park, Montalto, Bangor Pickie and Portrush. We also had fun days on Fridays throughout the Summer which were highly attended. The parents were so grateful and thankful that they had the opportunity to take their children to these fun days and trips as they wouldn't have been able to take them themselves due to money issues or no transport or not having confidence to go alone with their child. Many ethnic minority Families attended, and it was great to see them gain confidence and find their feet in a social setting.

Parents commented- We couldn't have got through Summer without Bloomfield, the trips and fun days were amazing, and we even got lunch provided!

Outcome 1- To Support the Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs In Bloomfield Community Association.

At Bloomfield playgroup I support many children with additional needs. I have supported children with developmental delays, social and communication difficulties, limited attention and emotional and behavioural needs. I do this by doing 1:1 with the child playing simple games, short stories etc. or by simply doing an activity that interests the child and gets them engaging with me. I have given support to ESOL children and their families. I do this by using visual aids with the child and having familiar things from their home/ country in the playgroup. I also used the Mantralingua PENpal to reassure children with familiar words and phrases in their own language. I make sure myself and all staff do regular training so we can give each child the best start in our playgroup. We have all done Hanen & Foundation Stage training, and we have all learnt a lot from this.

Some children with additional needs find it harder with toilet training so I support the family to try and achieve this. On some occasions parents aren't aware of the child having additional needs and I help the whole family on this journey.

Outcome 2 - To Support Parents and Carers in their Role as Educators by Providing Parenting Programmes, Training and Education Opportunities.

When meeting with new families and carrying out Home Visits I aim to build a trusting relationship with each family and encouraged them to talk to me about any concerns or worries they may have. Through regular contact with a family, I hope that Parents will become more open and honest with me and accepting of the advice given to them. I have built up some good relationships with families and they regularly come to programmes and to any trips I offer. They sometimes just need a chat to ask a few questions and I'm happy they feel they can come to me.

I offer advice to help support Language Development to Parents for their children along with helpful interactive songs, stories, and games. Parents have expressed how they find this to be useful in the home. I signpost to internal services through Sure Start to help me with speech and language.

Family Support Plans are made in partnership with the Parents, so they understand the vital contribution they make to their children's development, care and wellbeing. I ensure I allow the parents to make their own suggestions on play opportunities, asking their opinions on favourite toys, cartoons characters and praising them for the ideas being put forward.

I have run Solihull parenting programme which the parents all found interesting and learnt from it. Before running this course with parents, I build up a relationship with them first as I find it helps to get them to come along to the course and for them to be open and honest and get the most out of the course.

Outcome 3- To Signpost Families to Specialist Services as Appropriate.



We continue to offer support to all families through sign posting to local food banks, East Belfast baby bank, Summer Clothes Recycle Scheme, basically anything that will help & support Families. Other signposting and referrals have been made to St. Vincent de Paul, and Family Support Hub. I also share Facebook pages to Parents about tips and ideas on different play activities and offering advice on weaning etc. any local events that are happening I share this with Families. Parents have commented how useful this information is.

Outcome 4- To Liaise with Additional Needs Support Worker, Midwife and SLT at EBSS to Ensure Holistic Service.

When I do initial home visits, I assess what the family needs and do an in-house referral if needed. The speech and language therapist comes into Bloomfield playgroup to offer advice and support with any child I have concerns about. I make parents aware of this service and if they have concerns, they can speak to the therapist if needed. I have done regular stay and play sessions alongside the Speech and language therapist, these have gone well, and parents have engaged well. I refer families to the midwife if they need advice or want to join the breast-feeding support groups. I also took part in a 'Meet the Midwife' session.

Outcome 5- To Report on Outcomes Achieved to EBBSS on a Quarterly Basis.

I report all outcomes to East Belfast Sure Start on a Quarterly Report through the appropriate systems that are in place.

Ballybeen Womens Centre Report

Project Outcomes	
What did we do?	How well did we do it?
<p>1:1 support for approx. 15 children with complex needs on an ongoing basis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendances 160 • Unique Children 15 <p>Chatter Box Programme x 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Sessions Weekly • Unique Children 15 <p>Provide 12 sessions of programmes that support 16 parents in the community</p> <p>Provide 60 Home Visits to 20 families</p> <p>Provide 60 1:1 support sessions to 40 families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved 220 • Achieved 19 • Overachieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved 15 sessions • Achieved 24 parents • Overachieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved 31 • Achieved 11 • Target underachieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved 39 • Achieved 20 • Target underachieved
<p>Is anyone better off as a result?</p> <p>Another year complete, and what a fantastic year for Family Support within Ballybeen Women's Centre on behalf of East Belfast Sure Start.</p>	

My name is Michelle Gilmore, and I am the Family Support Worker here at BWC. I was welcomed onto the team in March 2024 and after working under the guidance of my predecessor, Amy Wightman, I took on the role fully in September 2024. Throughout the last year I have been incredibly fortunate to work alongside amazing families-be welcomed into their homes, I have met with wonderful charities and have developed relationships with Social Workers and Health Visitors.

When working with families and making the connections and gaining an understanding of how I can help, it was quickly apparent, in many families, that financial support was most needed. Thanks to established connections with Dundonald Food Bank, Lisburn and Castlereagh Social Supermarket, The Warehouse, ST. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army, Baby Bank and Home Start- I have been able to make referrals for support. This support has been in the form of food, fuel top ups, clothing, furniture and white goods. As always one of the biggest forms of support within Family Support was our Christmas appeal. We were fortunate to be able to once again link in with Salvation Army and Mission Christmas to gift families with toys for their little ones and we were able to provide additional fuel support from Bryson.

Other referrals for families have been made to agencies such as Family Connections, Barnardo's, Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services, SOLAS, Changing Lives and Home Start again for in home additional services separate to myself. Families that were identified for these support services have children who may display additional needs and require additional, longer term, support.

Coming on from children with additional needs, I am pleased to say that I have established a wonderful partnership with the SENCO within Ballybeen Women's Centre and together we have supported families in terms of Education Authority, referrals to specialist reports, completion of paper works for additional financial supports and helping them understand letters from professionals. Many families have relied on this service throughout the last year.

I ensure to keep parents/carers signposted to events and programmes rolling with EBSS and while many do attend, some do ask if these can be made available within Ballybeen Estate. When a playroom is available, I do hold Play and Stay events, however this is usually only once a quarter. Parents/carers are also provided with Sure Starts message of month and Page Tiger information is passed along.

Over the past few years at Ballybeen Women's Centre we have rolled out the Maternal Advocacy Support Group (MAS) for mums to support them on their emotional wellbeing. This year we are pleased to announce that we have added the 'Young Mums' to this. Young mums is specifically for mums aged 16-24 years old and alongside the Health Projects Co-Ordinator at BWC we successfully had a cohort for this. As well as supporting mums through this group I was able to link in with Early Years Manager to arrange childcare and provide additional support such as home visits, referrals,

signposting etc. Many of the young mums from this group went on to access other courses within BWC with some completing the OCN qualification.

Other programmes offered this year to parents/carers have included the following:

- HENRY Programme
- Discover You
- One on one counselling
- Paediatric First Aid
- Yarn for Mental Health
- Money worries and Mental Health
- Mental Health First Aid
- Summerhill – Rising Cost of Living
- Women's Breaking Barriers
- Respectful Relationships

Another well-established relationship that I have is the Social Work team. Here at BWC we offer spaces for Sponsored Day Care, again I link in with the Early Years Manager with families/children I feel would be suitable and feedback to appropriate Social Worker. Where required I support families on their targets, home management, attendance at appointments, case conferences and core groups.

This year, as with last, home visiting hasn't been the main source of communication with families. Many prefer to meet 1:1 within the centre when they attend classes, would rather have a chat over the phone and occasionally go on walks in the local community. While home visits are always encouraged, I am still able to link in regularly with families.

Last year we highlighted a key achievement that two of our Sure Start mums who had come through programmes themselves had go on to achieve their own counselling qualifications. This year we are delighted to announce that they are back and offering their support to our Young Mums Advocacy Support Group and supporting them on their journey.

I am very much looking forward to seeing what the next year has in store!

Michelle Gilmore
Family Support Worker

Walkway Community Association

Walkway Parent and Tots

Parent and Tots is a stay and play facility which encourages parents and guardians to play and bond with their children.

We aim to nurture the development of the children and build skills such as fine motor skills, hand-to-eye coordination, playing with others, communication, speech and language skills, and many more.

It has been a great year meeting new people from our local community and having the partnership with Sure Start to provide families with support and guidance. It has been lovely to welcome so many children to this group and watching them grow as the programme continues. Our favourite activities this year have been water based!

Walkway Community Association and East Belfast Sure Start have built a successful programme with over 50 people registered.

Here are some of the sessions we ran this year:

September 2024

- Bug hunting with leaves, sticks and magnifying glasses
- Sensory activity with oats and our wooden train set
- Doodle mats and painting activities

October 2024

- Water activity with sponges and jugs for squeezing and pouring
- Sand activity using trucks and our Fire Station/Fire Men
- Messy play with shaving foam and mirrored pebbles
- Halloween painting activity using vegetables and paint rollers for different shapes

November 2024

- Messy play with cornflower and water
- Animal washing station using farm animals covered in hot chocolate powder and a wash station with water and sponges
- Visits from Speech and Language – East Belfast Sure Start

December 2024

- Making playdough
- Activity encouraging children to put cheerios on pipe cleaners

- Christmas session – indoor soft play and Friendly Fox to provide professional festive photos

January 2025

- Sensory activity using cereal like oats and pasta shapes with cars and train sets
- Water activity using a tea set and fruits like lemon, oranges and limes
- Vegetable painting
- Visits from Sure Start for Sound Bath Therapy

February 2025

- Fruit and vegetable cutting activity
- Sensory activity using sand and cars/trucks.
- Making playdough

March 2025

- Sensory activity- freezing cars and animals in ice to encourage the children to smash the ice to free the toys
- Animal washing station using farm animals covered in hot chocolate powder and a wash station with water and sponges
- Water activity with flowers, fruit and tea set



Walkway Young Mums Programme

Walkways young parent programme provides a safe and inclusive environment where participants have been supported to identify shared issues affecting their lives daily. We have created a secure climate for the young mums and their children to address these issues with youth workers and local service providers. We have been successful in reducing the young mothers' feelings of isolation, increased their participation, increased their educational attainment, and helped them develop personal resilience. Most of all, we have improved the health and wellbeing of all our participants.

From September 2024 until June 2025, Walkways young parent programme has been supported by East Belfast Sure Start who have funded the creche facility for 10 children, one morning per week for 35 weeks, 105 hours. This creche provision has been fundamental for the 10 young mums' participation. East Belfast Sure Start have also delivered training to the young mums, offered parent support services and provided opportunities for the children to avail of the Sure Start Early Years programmes, aged 0-4yrs. The children have been able to come together for three hours per week for a full 35 weeks. The success of this has been that the children have developed friendships, they have learned and progressed in a shared, caring and professional space, and they have been able to participate alongside their mums on group activities and seasonal outings

In addition, they have funded programme costs for a young mums group that ran in the evening for 35 weeks with no need for creche provision, 10 young mums attended the evening group. With Sure Starts support, Walkway was able to create an engaging and interactive 35-week programme for two young mums' groups and for their children in our onsite crèche. The programme successfully addressed they key objectives of building self-esteem and resilience, reducing isolation, improving relationships between communities and improving overall health and wellbeing.

September – December 2024

- New children started in creche, settling in period and getting to know children.
- 10 young mums complete Paediatric First Aid accreditation.
- Halloween Party very well attended by children and their mums.
- Come Dine with me evening where mums together cooked a delicious roast dinner.
- 20 young mums made sock Gnomes for their children.

10 mums completed a parenting programme focused on Managing Anxiety, which they say has given them a better understanding of mental health, and a better understanding of unhelpful thinking styles and how this impacts them, they now know their triggers to anxiety and know where to get help locally. We included a self-care morning to a leisure centre in Newtownards where the mums relaxed and enjoyed some down time.

Mums and children all together had a Christmas Party, were visited by Santa and had their photographs done with him.

January-March 2025

10 mums completed a programme focused on improved mental health and wellbeing, but more specifically on improving self-esteem. We worked with the group to acknowledge and

identify negative thoughts and re framed negative thoughts. They learned strategies to enable them to; challenge cognitive distortions, consider alternative interpretations, practice mindfulness, seek social support, practice gratitude, and also setting realistic expectations. These skills took a lot of practice and the mums worked hard on these.

Easter party for the mums and kids together were they made easter hats.

Just before we finished for Easter, 41 mums and children attended Streamvale Farm for the Easter Bunny Hop four-hour session, everyone loved the Shared activity.

10 mums completed parenting training on Managing Anger.

April-June 2025

Mums took part in many crafting sessions, they made Spring wreaths, Box frames for photographs with their children, Making your own essential oils session. The young mums felt that the crafting activities helped them manage stress and anxiety, increased feelings of happiness, helped them relax and improved their overall mood. Engaging in crafting activities enabled the mums to learn different ways to relate to one another and encouraged their self-expression. They felt that crafting alongside others alleviated symptoms of anxiety, depression and loneliness.

Throughout the programme we have referred young mothers for counselling, mental health services and to Sure Start family support staff. The support of East Belfast Sure Start enabled us to provide an early year setting that enhanced the quality of life, and learning opportunities for both our young mothers and their children.



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