

## SURE START

### Guidance for the Evaluation of Sure Start

2020

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ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



### ***Why are the Education and Training Inspectorate evaluating Sure Start?***

The Department of Education provides funding for Sure Start, pre-school education and the foundation Stage in primary schools. It is widely understood that high quality early years experiences, education and support alongside working in partnership with parents are important contributory factors to a young child's future educational success.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) currently inspect and report on the outcomes, quality of provision and leadership and management in funded pre-schools and the foundation stage. A key action in the Department of Education Learning to Learn Framework was "Ensuring all DE funded services in the 0-6 age range are subject to a thorough area based inspection process". The Independent Review of Sure Start published in February 2015 recommended that the ETI contribute to the evaluation of Sure Start.

### ***What will ETI be evaluating?***

The focus of the evaluation in 2020 will focus on:

- identifying, quality assuring and disseminating effective practice case studies; and
- summarising the overarching features of effective practice.

### ***Which projects will be evaluated?***

A sample of projects will be selected based on self-nomination forms of effective practice case studies, submitted by Sure Start projects to represent a cross section of geographical areas, size and range of lead and accountable bodies.

### ***What can I expect to happen during an evaluation?***

Sure Start projects which have been selected to be part of this evaluation will be notified two weeks in advance of the visit.

The visit will take place over one or two consecutive days with a small evaluation team of two or three, led by a member of the ETI early years team.

The leader Inspector will contact the Sure Start project manager following the notification to arrange a suitable timetable for the visit.

During the visit the team will gather evidence to quality assure the nominated case study based on a range of first hand evidence including:

- observation of a sample of practice with the children and the parents;
- reading relevant documentation;
- discussions with key staff; and
- engagement with a sample of parents.

At the end of the evaluation each Sure Start project visited will receive a short oral feedback to inform the projects own self-evaluation leading to improvement.

### ***How can I prepare for an evaluation visit?***

There is no need to change your normal working practices in advance of the visit. The ETI lead Inspector will discuss the specific working arrangements during a phone call following notification by Inspection Services Team.

The project manager will be asked to:

- inform the staff about the guidance materials available: <https://tinyurl.com/Eval-Sure-Start>; and
- inform parents, as relevant to the specific case study, about the evaluation visit and invite them to make their views known during a short meeting or incidentally during the visit, to a member of the ETI team.

The team will require a base room to work in easy access to relevant documentation.

Reassure staff and parents that the purpose of the evaluation is to celebrate effective practice and promote improvement in the best interest of the children.

### ***What will happen after the evaluation?***

The final published report will represent findings across all projects visited and details on each individual case study. The report findings will be disseminated.

### ***What documentation will I make available to the inspection team?***

The inspection team will review a sample of current documentation which supports evidence of the development of effective practice linked to the nominated case study.

The documentation provided should only be that which you already have in place, and may include, for example:

- a list of the key staff, their roles and responsibilities;
- the address, with post code, of any programmes to be visited over the two days;
- samples of how the children's progress is tracked and how this information is used;
- samples of how parents progress is measured and how this information is used;
- feedback from parents or other stakeholders;
- photographic evidence of the range of experiences being provided for children and parents;
- samples of planning and assessment records for any of the programmes to be observed;
- samples of information provided for parents;
- information on the effectiveness of links with pre-schools or primary schools;

- examples of how leadership and management monitor and evaluate quality and outcomes;
- examples of self-evaluation, action plans and evidence of improvement linked to any aspect of the project.

The information needs to be provided in a form that is succinct, well labelled, easily located and accessible.

### ***What questions will the team ask?***

The team will meet with a range of leadership and management, staff, parents, or other stakeholders, as relevant to the case study, at an agreed time over the visit. They will also interact informally with staff, if appropriate during their observation of sessions. The following questions are only a guide as to the type of questions to expect. A team may ask supplementary questions to clarify a point or follow a line of enquiry.

### **Key discussion points**

- Tell me about your role/involvement in this case study/programme/developmental work.
- What/who has helped to make it effective/beneficial?
- Can you give any examples of who it has benefited and how? How do you know?
- Are there any plans to sustain and develop it further?
- What have you learned from being involved in this example?

**Supplementary questions** (as required to support other forms of evidence made available to the team)

- What was the baseline position/starting point and how was it identified?
- What needs/priorities were identified in relation to children/parents/staff?
- How were they identified? Who was involved? Eg consultation, audits, analysis of qualitative or quantitative data, meetings.
- What actions were planned? Who was involved? Was the planning oral or written? Who was involved in monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of the actions being taken? How was it monitored and evaluated?
- What actions were taken? Over what period of time? What challenges were faced? Where there any challenges and if so, how were they overcome?
- Did staff have any training/guidance or support? If so who delivered it and what difference did it make for the staff/parents/children?
- Did the staff use any particular approaches or tools to help plan, deliver or measure outcomes in the case study example? For example, Highscope, Solihull, action plans, Outcomes based Accountability, family star, Incredible Years, etc. If

so describe the benefits and any challenges with the approaches. Where any tailored to the project?

- What have been the key benefits of this case study to parents/staff/children/community?
- What have been the main challenges/barriers? How have they been overcome?
- What have been the key learning points for leadership and management?
- In what way (if any) has the project been supported/helped effectively in this case study by the following bodies: CCP, Lead body, Accountable body, Committee, Other organisation (please specify)
- Are there any plans to embed, or build on and develop the example further?
- Which aspects of the case study, if any, could be replicated in another project?
- What are the key factors which have contributed to the success of this case study example?