

# The impact of Sure Start local programmes on five year olds and their families <sup>[1]</sup>

Research Report DFE-RR067

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## AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf <sup>[2]</sup>

### Excerpts from the report:

This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

### Key findings:

After taking into consideration pre-existing family and area background characteristics, the three sets of analyses comparing children and families living in Sure Start Local Programme (SSLP) areas and those living in similar non-SSLP areas revealed mixed SSLP effects, most being positive/beneficial in nature and a couple being negative in character. This was the case when effects were evaluated with respect to child/family functioning when the children were age 5 and with respect to change over time in child/family functioning from age 3 (or 9 months for worklessness) until age 5.

#### The Impacts of SSLPs When the Children Were Aged 5:

- Children growing up in SSLP areas had lower BMIs than children in non-SSLP areas. This was due to their being less likely to be overweight with no difference for obesity (using WHO, 2008, criteria)
- Children growing up in SSLP areas experienced better physical health than children in non-SSLP areas.

The positive effects associated with SSLPs for maternal well being and family functioning, in comparison with those in non-SSLP areas were that:

- Mothers residing in SSLP areas reported providing a more cognitively stimulating home learning environment for their children.
- Mothers residing in SSLP areas reported providing a less chaotic home environment for their children.
- Mothers residing in SSLP areas reported greater life satisfaction.
- Mothers residing in SSLP areas reported engaging in less harsh discipline.

On the negative side, however, in comparison with those in non-SSLP areas;

- Mothers in SSLP areas reported more depressive symptoms.
- Parents in SSLP areas were less likely to visit their child's school for parent/teacher meetings or other arranged visits. Although the overall incidence of such visits was low generally.

Finally, no differences emerged between the NESS and MCS groups on 7 measures of cognitive and social development from the Foundation Stage Profile completed by teachers, 4 measures of socio-emotional development based on mothers' ratings, and mothers' ratings of area safety. In summary, across 21 outcomes, significant effects of SSLPs emerged for 8 outcomes.

**Related link:** News article: Sure Start good for families and for children's health, says researchers [GB] <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** Europe <sup>[4]</sup>

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