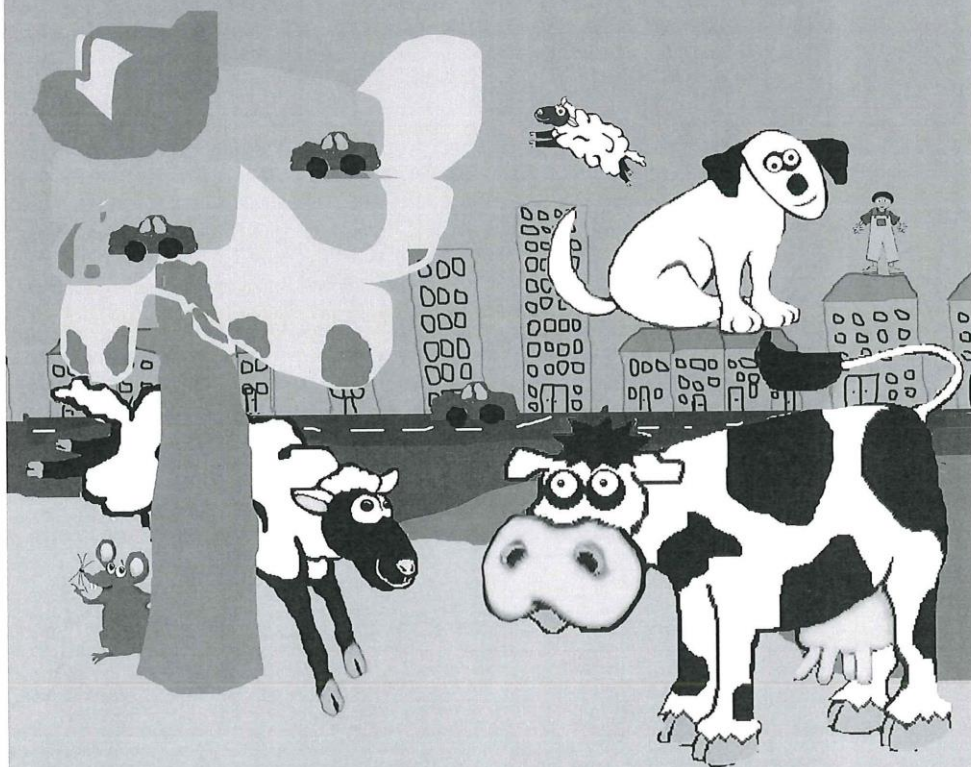


**BAA MOO YELLOW DOG  
SURESTART PROJECT  
EVALUATION REPORT  
JANUARY – APRIL 2004**



Report compiled and written by Imogen Kinchin

**Halfmoon**

**SureStart**

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## THE PROJECT - SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Half Moon is provided a theatre-based participatory and performance project for the very young, focussing upon Surestart areas in London during January-April 2004. The Esmee Fairburn Foundation financially supported this programme. *Baa Moo Yellow Dog* provided each area with a minimum of twenty participatory sessions working with four/five groups (i.e. drop-in centres, speech and language groups, toy libraries, and pre-nursery settings). The sessions used as a stimulus the participant's experience and response to *Baa Moo Yellow Dog* - Half Moon's specially commissioned professional theatre piece. This play was performed at Half Moon or local community venues/theatres or within Surestarts' own centres. The programme was supported by training sessions for all the care/play workers involved. The programme was based on a pilot initiative undertaken during February/March 2003 with Ocean Sure Start, in Tower Hamlets.

### CONTEXT TO THE PROGRAMME:

Half Moon YPT was approached in 2002 by Sabes Sugunasabesan, Director of Sure Start Ocean in Tower Hamlets to create a pilot theatre and participatory programme for carers/parents and their under 4s who attend drop-in, toy library and language and speech groups. This took place from January through March 2003 using as its theatrical stimulus our under 3s installation *Jumping Beans*. The workshop team then planned and delivered 30 sessions to 65 participants focusing upon 4 areas of development: looking [group and individual imagined story making]; jumping [group and individual physical action]; making a nest [noticing difference and similarities, using imagined objects], and sounds and rhythms [collective vocal response, and group communication]. The programme was fully documented and a report compiled.

### STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF BAA MOO PROGRAMME:

- **PREPARATION AND TRAINING** – a session for all play and care workers offered the chance for the leaders to take part themselves in the proposed creative sessions that would be undertaken with the parents/carers and the young children. The leaders were be able to offer advice and guidance to ensure that particular needs are taken on board by the creative workshop team as well as to become familiar themselves with the logistics of the programme. These sessions honed the key objectives that underpinned the programme.
- **THE PLAY** – all the participants experienced their own special performances of *Baa Moo Yellow Dog* either at their local venue (Half Moon) or at their own local centres. *Baa Moo Yellow Dog* was a simple 40-minute theatre experience with a linear narrative. The play followed Ash through his encounter with a dog, a cow and sheep and through the unfolding tale, he (along with the young audience) was encouraged to explore feelings of isolation and the acceptance of change, celebrate and develop creative play, and broaden knowledge of his world and the world of his parent/carer. In essence, the piece aimed to develop self-esteem for both the young child and accompanying adult. The play was professionally designed with an original music score with a performance team of three.
- **THE PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS** – the sessions took place in the Sure Start centres and lasted up to an hour each week. Two theatre specialists drawn from our workshop pool who had particular expertise in the field of early years arts delivery lead the

workshops. The sessions took as their stimuli *Baa Moo Yellow Dog*. For example, one session encouraged collective storytelling through a group play within an imagined world, another stimulated structured play through a variety of physical activities, and another sought to engender group cooperation and collective respect.

- **SUPPORT MATERIALS** – the company produced a simple, illustrated booklet that used the characters and stories of *Baa Moo Yellow Dog* to illustrate the underpinning learning points. Each child took this home with them at the end of the project.

**OBJECTIVES:**

Developed in partnership with the centres involved, the programme addressed:

1. Self-esteem; self-reliance and recognition of self-responsibilities; collective support of individual children with need [an early years learning goal – personal, social and emotional development].
2. Collaborative play; new language usage and English/mother-tongue exchange [an early years learning goal – communication, language and literacy].
3. Usage of found and created objects for play and communication; problem solving and overcoming difficult tasks successfully [an early years learning goal – knowledge and understanding of the world].
4. Handling new objects; exploring textures and sensory experiences [an early years learning goal – physical and creative development].
5. To particularly focus upon father/male carer interaction/role within early years development [an early years learning goal – whole family involvement in care].

Using the SureStart objectives developed in partnership with Half Moon each session sought to address these aims through multi sensory approaches, group activity and personal development. Each was realised through distinct sessions developed depending on groups' size, experience and involvement. For example:

Session 1:	Looking – group and individual imagined story making
Session 2:	Travelling and journeys – group and individual physical action
Session 3:	Discovering the unexpected – noticing differences
Session 4:	Sounds and rhythms – collective vocal response and group communication

## DETAILED OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME

### PREPARATION AND TRAINING

Each SureStart area involved with the BMYD project was allocated training sessions for workers to attend at Half Moon. Where it was more convenient the training took place at a centre chosen by the SureStart project manager. This was particularly applicable to areas outside of our catchment area such as Barnet and Croydon.

The training was developed to ensure that the sessions held at the centres were suitable for the groups wants and needs. The training was to inform the workers ensuring that the work and exercises performed at the centres could be continued after the project ended. The training sessions were about 3 hours long and involved between 4 – 10 workers from the SureStart centres.

The sessions began with a brief background to the project, contextualising its existence and further development. A summary of the production was given. This was also an opportunity for workers to ask questions about their involvement in the project and during the sessions. The next stage of the training was led by two Half Moon Practitioners employed for the project. The workers were guided through each of the practical sessions to be undertaken and offered the opportunity to participate practically. As well as allowing the workers to gain practical experiences as part of their professional development ensuring a legacy, the training enhanced the workers understanding of the work Half Moon was bringing to the centres so they felt comfortable and prepared.

The evaluation from the workers was extremely positive and was one of the most successful aspects of the project. The training days enhanced Half Moon's belief that our work is to develop skills that can continue growing after the project has finished and so allowing ownership of skills experienced and for the personal development for the workers.

From Half Moon's perspective, the training day was also an important element in learning about the groups we were going to be working with. It was an opportunity to discover basic details such as group numbers, special needs or requirements within the group, the environment in which the sessions were to take place etc. What the workers could tell us about the context of each group enabled us to develop sessions that were able to respond to individual needs ensuring that the session templates were given breath to address particular needs.

Selection of comments:

- The training day for the staff was very good – *John Smith's Community Centre*
- The training day was very helpful – *Underhill Baptist Church Under 5's Toddler Group*
- Encouraged staff to be innovative, have fun and learn at the same time  
*Collingwood and Stepney SureStart Centre*

## THE PLAY



### The Story:

Where are you when cows bleat like sheep, pigs squeak like mice and cats a cock-a-doodle do, too? In Ash's world.

Join Ash as he looks in holes, turns corners, and hops – skips – jumps over cracks. A world where things are not what they first seem and when if you squeeze your eyes shut tight enough, you might see a yellow dog.

*Baa Moo Yellow Dog* explores the playful imagination of a small boy as he tries to bring order to the unexpected and where difference is a good thing. A world where it doesn't matter if sheep moo - if that is what you want - because you are only three.

A play for 2-5 year olds of few words and oodles of imagination.

*Baa Moo Yellow Dog* was developed for 2 – 5 year olds from the pilot programme initiated by Half Moon and SureStart on the Ocean based on research by the creative team among children and parents attending Surestart centres during 2003. This touring production was an integral part of the SureStart programme. All of the groups saw the performance either at Half Moon Theatre or at a centre close to their meeting points. Alternative venues were Oxford House; St Hilda's Community Centre; Croydon Clocktower; Underhill Baptist Church, Barnet; West Hendon Community Centre, St Matthias Hall and Barnet Multi Cultural Community Centre.

The performance was placed within the workshop schedule to enable focus and development of particular themes. The majority of groups saw the performance on week 3 of a 5-week schedule. The scheduling of the performance was often dependant on group timetables and the overall tour schedule.

### Selection of comments:

- A great first experience of theatre *Ocean SureStart*
- A lovely first experience of theatre for the children. Parents report that children are still talking about the performance. *John Smiths Community Centre.*
- Our parents thoroughly enjoyed the show too as it was so visual. *Mayflower Primary, Poplar.*
- I loved it, the colours, sound and rhythm. *Collingwood and Stepney SureStart Centre*

## **THE PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS INCLUDING STAFFING**

Each SureStart zone was able to choose five groups to participate in the project. Each group within the SureStart zone had 4 workshops and one performance. Some zones such as Weavers and Spitalfields only involved 4 groups entitling each group to 5 workshops. The programme not funded with assistance from the Esmee Fairburn Foundation (Barnet and Croydon) varied the number of workshops depending on the extent of involvement with the project and time and budget constraints.

The team of workshop practitioners continued to develop the session plans throughout the project with constant evaluation and communication with other members of the team.

Please see attached session plans for examples of the work carried out. These plans are only outlines and for the majority of the time the sessions were very dependant on the groups' needs and involvement. On each session plan examples there are comments about ways to improve the session and evaluation of each session. This process was carried out for all sessions ensuring that workers were constantly aware of group progress and each worker could respond accordingly to the group.

Each SureStart centre differed greatly and each groups' experience worked on varying levels of success. This was dependant on the set up and context of the group. Those who responded well to the workshops as they were developed were the groups that had been established for some time and were not drop in centres but nurseries or groups who met for an allocated time each week. There were a number of reasons for this:

- the workshops were designed to last for approximately 1 hour although this was not always the most positive use of time and the tutors found it more effective to establish themselves within the environment for the first 10-15 minutes of the session allowing more confidence and interaction within the group. This meant that the average time of the session was 45 minutes. However, in groups such as the toy libraries or drop in centres this time was not utilised due to parents and children arriving in the middle of a session or no one attending until towards the end of the allocated time slot. This highlights the need to create a bespoke workshop for the varying needs of individual groups.
- some of the groups were drop-in centres and attention was often quite sporadic and difficult to maintain focus and the attention of the younger children in particular.
- the toy libraries were the hardest groups to work with for the reason that the families attending these sessions were often unaware that the workshop sessions were taking place and were often reluctant to take part preferring instead to play with the toys as this was the main reason for attending. It was very challenging for the tutors to try and convince the participants to join in imagining new and unexplored worlds accompanied by a yellow dog when surrounded by new and interesting toys.

## SESSION 1 – Collingwood and Stepney zone.

**SURE START GROUP:** Bouncers (Collingwood and Stepney)

**TUTORS:** Justin and Tabby

**WORKSHOP:** A

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS SESSION:**

To create a safe positive environment.  
To introduce ourselves to the group.  
To bond with the group as practitioners.  
To encourage the participants to develop drama/ play and imagination skills through exploring the theme of "looking" and "storytelling".

### **SESSION PLAN:**

### **TIMES:**

Introduction

Warm up – physical

Warm up – Name Game

Little boy/ girl in role (co-facilitated by other worker)

Pass the cap/ hat round the circle. Narrative story.

Introduction of yellow dog

Where can we take yellow dog?

Introduction of the 4 corners as different spaces, facilitated by the answers to story questions.

Craft work: picture of something yellow dog sees.

Introduction of song:  
Baa baa moo moo yellow dog, How I love my yellow dog...

Warm down and finish

### **END OF SESSION EVALUATION:**

A very positive session. The group is a very established group who have been together for a long time. They are all around 2-3 years old and nearly all have English as a first language. The space that was provided was perfect being a large bare room with lots of floor cushions.

The parents were all very involved in the session and there was a high level of interaction between parent and child.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED FOR THE NEXT SESSION?**

Encourage the group to physicalise the games and activities more. Next week introduce Yellow dog says.



## SESSION 2 – Weavers and Spitalfields zone

**SURE START GROUP:** St. Hilda's Community Centre

**TUTORS:** Ash and Jools

**WORKSHOP:** B

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS SESSION:**

To create a safe and positive environment.

To encourage participants to develop drama/ play/ imagination skills through exploring the theme of "travelling and journeys".

### **SESSION PLAN:**

### **TIMES:**

Introduction: Hello again and introduction

Warm up: Physical

Warm up: Name game

Magic circle: cross in different environments and styles.

Bring in yellow dog.

Pass the parcel – yellow dog. Different moods and emotions.

Prepare for a journey

- Pack an imaginary rucksack.
- Paint the journey with magic paint and create different environments.
- Travel to the four corners of the room on different parts of the journey.
- Travel to the four corners singing yellow dog, moving in different ways: slow, fast. Using warm up of magic circle as inspiration.

Craftwork: Make map of journey

Warm down and finish.

### **END OF SESSION EVALUATION:**

Very successful session, mostly led by Ash this week, and the group were more relaxed with us. Some newcomers but the session seemed to be very involving for all. The use of props really improved their responses to the work. We had done most of the work after 45 minutes but their attention was starting to flag anyway, so we did craft work for the last 15 minutes

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED FOR THE NEXT SESSION?:**

Just more use of music and props, as they seem to respond so well to these.

## SESSION 3 – Ocean zone

**SURE START GROUP:** Ocean Drop In Centre

**TUTORS:** Justin and Tabby

**WORKSHOP:** C

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS SESSION:

To create a safe and positive environment.

To encourage participants to develop drama/ play/ imagination skills through exploring the theme of "discovering the unexpected – noticing differences".

### SESSION PLAN:

### TIMES:

Introduction then warm up: physical / warm up: Vocal game based on the expected (e.g. use of animal flash cards, making sounds)

Set up 4 corners as colours (i.e. red, yellow, blue, green), and place things in correct corners.  
Green = grass, trees, leaves,

Imaginary object – describe and imagine.

Real objects – yellow dog has found a sack. What's in the sack?

2 approaches:

- 1 bag filled with 5 – 7 objects, feel in the bag and describe the object. Place it in the middle of the circle.
  - Use contrasts: pick out the softest/ hardest/ heaviest/ warmest etc.
  - What could that object become? Stone = egg. Feathers = bird.
- 4 bags. Each has a different object in it.
  - The bags are magic and things are very different inside the bag than they are outside.
  - Describe how the object feels; imagine what it looks like. Use colours.
  - I.e. there might be a blue banana that is spiky in one bag and a cold purple square banana in another bag.

Apply the concept of corners as suitable for this session.

Craft work: Create masks of animals with different colours.

Animal jigsaw / treasure hunt for jigsaw pieces. Then warm down.

Finish.

### END OF SESSION EVALUATION:

Once again a very small group mainly consisting of newcomers who came in sporadically throughout the session. This was complicated by half term activities, which meant that we lost the group halfway through the session. We did however gain a new batch of two at the end of the session. This made adhering to the session plan quite difficult – although we did more or less. However one very positive outcome of the session was that we used the flipbook and narrated action to tell the story of Baa Moo Yellow Dog. This was very well received by the two groups.

### WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED FOR THE NEXT SESSION?

Once again we need to integrate the story telling aspect of the workshop with the craft activity of the session. They liked the object in the bag but they were not able to respond to any questioning regarding the stimulus. This group has a very limited response to language. We need to look at follow up activities that would fit around a retelling of the story. Look at making masks with the group shadow play for the different animals. Tableaux from the story.

## SESSION 4 – Shadwell zone

**SURE START GROUP:** Toy house Library - Bluegate

**TUTORS:** Ash & Imogen and Tyrone

**WORKSHOP:** D

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS SESSION:**

To create a safe and positive environment.

To encourage participants to develop drama/ play/ imagination skills through exploring the theme of "sound and rhythm".

### **SESSION PLAN:**

### **TIMES:**

Introduction

Warm up: Physical

Bring in yellow dog

Warm up: Vocal response

Yellow dog wants to go to the beach

Journey to beach (songs and sounds)

Beach

Animals at beach and different sounds – crab, seagull, donkey, etc.

Fairground rides – waltzers, death slide, rickety bridge etc. (with different sounds)

Weather Soundscape with newspaper.

Introduction of the 4 weathers as different areas of sound.

Wind - flapping paper

Rain - tapping with rolled up paper

Walking through snow – stamp feet and use friction between two scrunched up bits of paper

Leaves and branches breaking in the storm – Tear paper

Play with leaves – using ripped up bits of paper

Make rattles or snow shakers as I call them, with cups and a little popcorn and coloured paper.

### **END OF SESSION EVALUATION:**

Very successful session. Definitely removing the toys has had a wonderful effect on all the participants. Some of the shyer ones are starting to join in a lot more.

### **ANY FURTHER COMMENTS:**

Staff commented on how different and better the sessions have been since the toys have disappeared.

## SESSION 5 – Shadwell zone

**SURE START GROUP:** Toy House Library – Shapla

**TUTORS:** Justin and Tabby

**WORKSHOP:** E. THE FINAL SESSION

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS SESSION:**

To create a safe and positive environment.

To encourage participants to develop drama/ play/ imagination skills through exploring the theme of "sound and rhythm".

**SESSION PLAN:**

**TIMES:**

Introduction

Warm up: Physical – balloon up in air

Bring in yellow dog

Warm up: Vocal response

Yellow dog has his own Circus

What have we got in our CIRCUS? Animals, clowns, etc...

Journey to circus.(maybe songs and sounds) Carriage? Have some children being HORSES, DRIVER, PASSENGERS etc...

Arrive at location

Park and unpack.

Put up Tent – mime hammering in tent pegs etc...

Make the RING using fabric

Circus acts – Children perform

Ideas for acts: Trapeze, lion tamer, jumping through hoops, tightrope walking, clowns – juggle/throw buckets of water/play tricks/prat falls/cops and robbers/clapping to get crowd going, cannon, trampoline, leader in role as ringmaster, bows!!!

Yellow dog tired: let's help him sleep

Material circle, stretch material across the circle and make different sounds and movement depending on the colour and texture of the material.

Bounce yellow dog on the material, increase and decrease sound and movement.

Finally cover dog with material and all sleep for 15 – 20 seconds after the party. Sing Song

Craft – clown masks/ lions

Warm down and goodbyes.

**END OF SESSION EVALUATION:**

This group had an extra session E. This session illustrated the continuing problems that we have been experiencing with this group. Firstly the children are under the target age group and are too young to really respond to a structured session. There was no clear start time for the session, with people arriving throughout the session, the majority right at the end. There is no consistency with the attendance and makeup of the group.

Also we feel that because the support workers have only just joined the centre they are quite reticent about joining in and do little to encourage the mothers to help.

These five examples of session plans are only a representation of the entire project but give some insight to the preparation and evaluation of each session.

Selection of comments:

- I hope that the Half Moon Company can come back again with more original ideas. It's an excellent workshop and I would recommend it to parents, so much so that it's definitely made us feel that we must see a show at the theatre. *Shadwell centre*
- The children really enjoyed themselves and were all really involved. *Sunflower group (Lakeview Centre)*
- The children participated more than expected, especially those with poor looking and listening skills and limited concentration. *Orchid group (Lakeview Centre)*
- It allowed me to observe the children in a different light and see how they were towards new faces and new situations. *Glamis Nursery.*

With over 170 workshops taking place from January – May 2004 the schedule demanded that workshops ran consecutively in five areas of Tower Hamlets – Collingwood and Stepney, Ocean, Poplar, Shadwell and Weavers and Spitalfields, and the boroughs of Barnet and Croydon. To ensure that we had sufficient staffing levels a team of 8 were employed from the Half Moon Workshop Pool. This is a pool of core 25 practitioners with different skills and experiences that we use for different projects depending on the requirements. Our team of 8 practitioners brought a range of skills; two men were purposefully employed to ensure that we fulfilled number 5 of the SureStart objectives: To particularly focus upon father/male carer interaction/role within early years development [an early years learning goal – whole family involvement in care].

One practitioner was also an experienced musician and brought her sarangi (an Indian string instrument) to each workshop she attended. This added an extra element to the overall feeling of the session and resulted in very positive experience for the participants. The staff for the project were:

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR:  
PRACTITIONERS/ OUTREACH TEAM:

Imogen Kinchin  
Justin Allder  
Greg Ashton  
Emma Langrish  
Paula Manning  
Emily Nightingale  
Tabitha Owens  
Joyce Terret  
Jools Voce  
Ronnie Peters

CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA STUDENT

Selection of comments:

- Almost all of the children have second language English and are extremely shy. The tutors had such a lovely way with them that all the children felt confident in joining in.
- Ash and Joyce were friendly to the staff and children and worked hard to ensure the children were having fun.
- Jools and Ash were excellent, very professional, spontaneous and very good with the little ones.
- It was nice that the staff remembered children and parents names on arrival and throughout the workshop.
- They were friendly, happy and enthusiastic and patient with children and staff.

### **SUPPORT MATERIALS**

When developing the sessions with the team of practitioners we ensured that we fulfilled, as much as possible, the aims and objectives of SureStart. Due to the fact that the majority of participants we were going to be working with would have English as a second language it was very important to provide workshops that did not rely completely on verbal communication and interaction. The session plans developed were multi sensory and could be adjusted to work with different groups and situations.

### **KEY PROPS**

- Yellow Dog – this was a continuous prop and used or referred to throughout all sessions. We found that it increased familiarity and also helped with understanding commands and instructions and was a quarter-size version of the yellow dog the children saw in the play.
- Storybook – this was given out at the end or after the performance experienced by the children and workers. This was a 12 page hard-backed ring-bound book in full colour illustration using moments from the play. It was produced to encourage continued development and learning. This prop also encouraged workers to continue working with themes and games/exercises that had been initiated by the Half Moon workers.
- CD - music was an integral part of the workshops enhancing the multi-sensory experience. To continue this and encourage further development after the project was finished a copy of the CD of the 40 minute score of the play was given to each group.
- Colour Bag – children respond well to colours and different textures so strips of material were used to support ideas and encourage imagination contributing to creating a new environment such as a circus space, water (a river, the sea) from this animals were dramatised and participants went on a journey with yellow dog using props and material to feed this process.
- Sound Bag - shakers/rattles were created using plastic cups, popcorn kernels and coloured paper. This craft element was used as part of the music session that also used newspapers to create different sounds and rhythms.

Selection of comments:

- ☛ When the children see the book they remember the event and talk about it – *Glamis Nursery*
- ☛ The children ask for the book to be read two or three times a day! – *John Smiths Community Centre*
- ☛ We have had comments from parents who almost know the books off by heart now. *Collingwood and Stepney SureStart*
- ☛ I learnt a lot of ideas from the workshops and will continue to use their ideas while listening to the CD tracks. *Weavers SureStart*

### **PARTICIPANTS**

There were a total of 165 workshops in the following 8 areas:

Tower Hamlets:	Collingwood and Stepney:	6 groups:	4 sessions
	Ocean:	6 groups:	4 sessions
	Poplar:	4 groups:	5 sessions
	Shadwell:	4 groups:	5 sessions
	Weavers and Spitalfields:	4 groups:	5 sessions
Barnet:	West Hendon:	2 groups:	4 sessions
	Underhill:	2 groups:	4 sessions
Croydon:	Central:	2 groups:	2 sessions

Each session was attended by between 2 – 20 young participants as well as varying numbers and attendance of parents/ carers. Numbers did vary from week to week depending on the type of group participating in the project. All of these numbers are approximate and were given by the individual centres. Numbers fluctuated on a weekly basis for reasons stated previously.

Organisation Name	Size of group
<b><u>Weavers and Spitalfields Sure Start groups</u></b>	
St Hilda's Community Creche	10 children + 10 parents
Jagonari Woman's Centre	6 children + parents
Colombia Market Nursery	60 children split into 3 groups
Allen Gardens playgroup	15 children + 7 adults
<b><u>Stepney and Collingwood Sure Start groups</u></b>	
Bouncers	10 - 20 families
Stifford Community Centre	4+ children and parents
John Smith's Early Years Centre	22 children + 9 staff
John Smiths Centre	15 children + 15 adults
Old Church Nursery	2 groups of 15 children
St Bartholomew's 1 o'clock club	15 children + 6 adults
<b><u>Ocean Sure Start groups</u></b>	
Brayford Square	20 children
Ocean Estate Tenants and Lease holders Association	10 - 12
Tower Hamlet's Opportunity Group	10 children + 7 workers
Alice Model School Nursery	20 children

Organisation Name	Size of group
Ocean Drop in Centre	1 – 10 children and families
Halley Primary School (toy library)	6 - 8 children
<b><u>Shadwell Sure Start groups</u></b>	
Toyhouse Library - Shapla	3 - 10 families
Toyhouse Library - Bluegate	5 - 15 families
Eva Armsby Centre	8 + families
Glamis Nursery	12 children
<b><u>Barnet Sure Start groups</u></b>	
Underhill Valley Playgroup	18 children
Underhill Under 5's p + t group	20 children
West Hendon Opportunity Group	16 children
West Hendon Lakeview Children + Family Centre	60 children split between 3 groups
<b><u>Sure Start Croydon groups</u></b>	
Sure Start Nursery	20 children
First Steps Nursery and Head Start	20 – 24 children
<b><u>Sure Start Around Poplar groups</u></b>	
Poplar Play	10 – 15 children
Robin Hood Garden Parents and Toddlers	3 – 10 families
Bumble Bees Stay and Play Toy Library	5 – 10 families
Mayflower Nursery	15 children

All of these numbers are approximate and were given by the individual centres. Numbers fluctuated on a weekly basis for reasons stated previously.

Whilst nurseries and structured centres maintained constant attendance over the 5- 6 week period, toy libraries and drop in centres were unable to predict attendance numbers and numbers were very dependant on the weather, other additional activities and communication from the groups to the parents/ carers attending the drop in centres. The workshop took place at an allocated time within the drop in centre. Toy libraries were also a very difficult location to work within due to the fact that many of the families came along to play with the toys and were not necessarily aware of the workshop drama sessions taking place and focus was therefore distracted and sporadic. The workers had to ask for the toys to be stored away whilst the session was on but this resulted in some participants choosing not to attend at all because they did not want to take part in the workshop.

Although participant numbers varied throughout the project in certain centres numbers increased. This was applicable in centres where parents were able to observe from a distance and as the sessions developed skills and confidence the parents/carers felt comfortable enough to join in without feeling pressured.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Across all areas of the project sourced from information returned to us the following information demonstrates the average demographic across all of the SureStart areas:



67%: Black and ethnic minority groups; 33%: white

72%: Women; 28%: Men

6%: Registered disabled.

#### **OVERVIEW OF SURESTART AREAS**

As previously stated, each SureStart region varied, as did the groups within each zone. While this was one of the most exciting aspects of the projects – the sheer variety and breadth of encounters – this was also something of a problem as evidently it was very difficult to actually evaluate the experiences as one unit. This was dependant on the set up and context of the group, how long they had been meeting, their relationship with the SureStart staff/set-up and importantly experience of such work – be it never before with individuals excited by the new experience, or shy and uneasy, or be it from their own bad experiences of similar work or excitement at having an opportunity again to work with skilled artists in their own spaces. As a result, we placed much emphasis upon individual and leader evaluation. The forms we used are contained within the appendix of this report.

In this section we divide the report into those who are directly fund assisted by Esmee Fairburn and those who participated in the programme outside of this funding source.

#### **ESMEE FAIRBURN FUND ASSISTED AREAS IN TOWER HAMLETS: Shadwell; Collingwood and Stepney; Surestart on the Ocean; and Weavers and Spitalfields**

Initially the project began working with four SureStart areas. Response and enthusiasm varied greatly from area to area depending on the groups' knowledge and experience of the work of Half Moon. This was at times challenging especially coupled with the varying types of groups that were part of the project ranging from nurseries to drop in centres and toy libraries. Overall the response and feedback has been very positive and the areas where the project showed teething issues will be given greater support in the future and improved for a potential project in 2005.

#### **SHADWELL**

**Lead:**

**SHARON ELLIS – DEPUTY PROGRAMME MANAGER**

#### **Participant centres:**

**Glamis Nursery**

**Toy House Library – Bluegate**

**Toy House Library – Shapla**

**Eva Armsby Centre**

Following Sharon's initial briefing of centres, all co-ordination was passed to the Half Moon facilitating clear lines of communication and opportunities to talk directly about the project details tailoring needs etc. including sates and times of sessions etc. Each group also made sure at least one worker attended the training session that took place at Half Moon a couple of weeks before the project began.

Shadwell's involvement was very successful in terms of organisation and structure. The most successful centre was Glamis Nursery mainly due to its already existing structure in a nursery setting contrasting with the sporadic nature of the toy libraries. The workers at Glamis Nursery were all very involved with the project and were very open to the ideas and concept of the project. This knowledge informs the successfulness of the project. The majority of Toy Library attendees were unaware of the workshops and performance.

The workers commented on the effect of the storybooks, the music soundtrack CD and the experience of performance. These experiences and tools will filter through the every day structure at the nursery.

**COLLINGWOOD AND STEPNEY**  
**Lead: SANDRA CATER – PROGRAMME MANAGER**

**Participant centres:**  
**John Smiths Community Centre**  
**Bouncers**  
**Stifford Community Centre**  
**John Smiths Early Years Children's Centre**  
**St Bartholomew's 1 o'clock club**  
**Old Church Nursery**

There were six groups involved from Collingwood and Stepney. One of the centres was a nursery and the others were all parent and children centres. These centres varied dependant on numbers and the length of the group's existence within the community. Both groups at John Smith's were very enthusiastic and had high numbers of attendance. The group leaders were very encouraging and ensured that attendees to the centre were aware of the workshops taking place. This meant that involvement was maximised and the groups are very keen to take part in the project next year.

There were a large majority of children under the age of 3 at each of the centres and in response to this the workers had to adjust their expectations of the workshops and the group. This was a positive experience as it was able to inform all future workshops and ensure that the standard was maintained throughout the project regardless of age, experience and ability.

Once again the nursery was the most structured of the groups and had consistent attendees to each weekly session. This enhanced the experience for each child and the Half Moon workers were able to develop themes and experiences.

Centres such as Bouncers and St Bartholomew's 1 o'clock club were very different because numbers constantly varied and ages ranged from 6 months to 4 years old. This did prove difficult at times and one of the groups misunderstood the location of the performance meaning that unfortunately some of the group missed a key element of the project. Children with quite complex needs at John Smith's Children Centre responded very positively especially with regards to attention span during the performance.

The aim of bringing theatre to local families and communities and for them to experience a performance of a high quality was achieved. The after-effects of the project were deemed to be long lasting and were obvious within the groups. The addition of the storybooks and music soundtrack CD's helped to enhance this experience and were

welcomed by the workers at the centres. This project has also encouraged staff to be more innovative, have fun and learn at the same time.

#### **SURESTART ON THE OCEAN**

**Lead: SABES SUGNASBEGAN – PROGRAMME MANAGER & CAROL LAW –  
DEPUTY PROGRAMME MANAGER (previously Muriel)**

#### **Participant centres:**

**Ocean Drop-in Centre**

**Brayford Square**

**Tower Hamlets Opportunity Group**

**TLA**

**Toy Library – Halley School**

**Alice Model School Nursery**

Ocean had worked with us on the pilot project in 2003 so knew what to expect and some of the Ocean centres had worked with us before and were very keen to re-establish the links once again. We worked with a variety of groups including a drop-in centre, a Toy Library and a nursery. Once again experiences and responses varied depending on the context and environment that the workshops were taking place in. The nursery again was very effective and structured with regular attendees in contrast to the drop-in centre that one week had one child and the following week three new children would turn up and the Half Moon workers would have to begin again. After this week the workers re-evaluated the template of the workshop and decided to create each workshop as a stand-alone session so regardless of whether participants attended all or one workshop there would be an equal amount of involvement and understanding from everyone.

The use of yellow dog as a recurrent theme within all of the workshops was a very successful addition to the project. It encouraged and helped children to recognise a motif on a weekly basis and when watching the performance the attention of the children was maintained as they waited to see yellow dog. The Half Moon workers used yellow dog as a tool to help solve problems and situations with the participants.

There was an enormous and successful rapport between Half Moon staff, parents, children and SureStart staff during the project and an idea suggested by Carol Law was to create a pool of local staff to run similar programmes with some supervision from Half Moon as a way of making the concept more affordable for organisations with limited funding. This suggestion opens up many possibilities and is an expansion of one of the main concepts of this project. The training at the beginning was to empower the workers to get involved and give a greater understanding of the work we do at Half Moon.

The program encouraged initiative and encouraged interactions between children and parents/ other adults.

- We had evidence of children showing what they had been doing to adults at home and of a parent tickling children with a feather in public, which had come from the programme. *Carol Law*
- I felt that the project worked well in venues where there was a group of children who already attended regularly. It worked less in a Drop-in environment where parents are used to being able to attend on an ad-hoc basis... Maybe introduce the

project with a taster session at a SureStart event to reach a larger number of families. *Carol Law*

**WEAVERS AND SPITALFIELDS**

**Lead: ABDUL ULLAH – PROGRAMME MANAGER**

**Participant centres:**

**St Hilda's Community Centre**

**Columbia Market Nursery**

**Allan Gardens Playgroup**

**Jagonari Women's Centre**

We have not received an evaluation form from the Programme Manger so are unable to make direct comments from this perspective but will make evaluative comments from individual group reports that were all returned.

All of the groups involved in the project were very enthusiastic and forthcoming. Columbia Market Nursery was very structured because of the nature of the group. The structure was slightly different from the other groups to ensure that we were able to work with as many children as possible. There were three 20 minutes sessions that took place in three different areas around the nursery. However, as each session progressed more and more children joined in so by the last session within the hour there were approximately 30 children taking part.

The other centres were of a Drop-in nature but still had quite a solid structure and regular attendees. Performances took place at various locations – St Hilda's as part of International Woman's Day and Oxford House. Unfortunately there was a problem with Jagonari Centre's performance due to programming clash but participants were able to attend a public performance at Half Moon instead.

There was a very positive response regarding the long-term effects of the project. The main comment was that of the skills gained by parents and workers enabling them to continue the ideas that are simple and effective. There were a few problems with transport and who was responsible for the organisation of this element – SureStart or Half Moon – a compromise was agreed but to avoid any confusion it would be useful to make this clear at the beginning of the project.

The locations for the performance were problematic due to misunderstandings with times and dates of performances and workshops. This needs to be clearer from the very beginning of the project and communication within the group should be more frequent with the Surestart leader passing on regular information to the participants of the project regarding times, dates and locations.

Despite these glitches the involvement of both the children and parents/ carers was very successful and all groups have expressed a very strong interest in being involved in 2005.

**ADDITIONAL AREAS: Underhill Barnet; West Hendon Barnet; Central Croydon; Poplar Tower Hamlets.**

**UNDERHILL BARNET**

**Lead: SUE FELGATE – PROGRAMME MANAGER**

**Participants centres:**

**Underhill Baptist Parent and Toddler Group**

**Underhill Valley Playgroup**

Groups' experiences were mixed. From the initial meeting there was a great deal of resistance from Underhill about the work we were proposing to bring to the group. We were not sure if this was based on bad experiences, lack of trust with the Surestart leaders as if 'imposing' the work, or whether the project was simply too large to start. Some in the group did not always feel confident with the Half Moon staffs interaction with the under 3's offering their own expertise as an alternative. The staff tried to accommodate this but found this difficult given their skills in this field and their desire to ensure that the work addressed the aims set by Surestart. Despite these initial problems and resistance the groups did get involved and valued the input and presence of professionals and an insight into theatre and a new theatrical experience. The response to the performance of Baa Moo Yellow Dog was very positive and all participants and their parents and carers gained a lot from the experience. The storybooks were a welcome element of the project and will continue to be used within the group. The main issue that came up within this area was the type of workshop for the age group within the centre. Further development will be undertaken to ensure that we are equipped and prepared to provide sufficient workshops for under 3's. This is not a negative from Half Moon's perspective, but an example of the need to concentrate on developing stronger foundations with particular groups before embarking on an intensive five-week project. This is in response to differing needs within different groups.

**WEST HENDON BARNET**

**Lead: SUE FELGATE – PROGRAMME MANAGER**

**Participant centres:**

**West Hendon Opportunity Group**

**Lakeview Children and Family Centre**

The two groups we worked with in West Hendon were a lot more open to the notion of the workshops and performance. West Hendon accepted the project much more openly and was more forthcoming within the group sessions and towards the Half Moon tutors. Very much as a result of the type of centres that we were working with. Lakeview requested that the workshops had a slightly different format to the usual structure. Because of the high number of children attending the centre during the day the workshop was split into three sessions each lasting 45minutes each. This meant that over 60 children were able to participate each week. The shortened length of the workshop meant that attention was maintained throughout and the workers at the centre actively encouraged participation. There was - in contrast - a very different attitude towards the Half Moon workers. The group responded very positively to the workshops and the structure provided over the 5 weeks.

The centre's workers remarked on the increased confidence and self-esteem of many of the participants during and after the project. The storybooks had a positive reaction and will be used after the project to continue and develop themes explored over the 5 weeks.

- It has opened up the possibility of doing more projects of this kind with groups who have not experienced this in the past. There was a lot of initial suspicion that was dispelled and I feel that now the groups would be a lot more open to external group work... Having more staff support from SureStart could alleviate much of the negative comment. *Sue Felgate, Barnet Programme Manager.*

## **CROYDON CENTRAL**

**Lead: ???**

**Participant centres:  
Surestart Day Nursery  
First Steps Head Start Nursery**

This SureStart area had a slightly different structure due to restrictions with time and budget. We worked with two different centres. Both groups consisted of two groups combined at each session. This has varying effects. The dynamic was slightly altered because of newcomers present at the sessions but overall this did not impact too heavily on the workshop. Croydon only had two workshops. One workshop took place the week before the performance and the second workshop took place the week after the performance to enable themes and ideas to be seeded and then developed in more depth following the performance experience. The programme was well received and the response was very positive.

No evaluation forms have been received from the project leader so we are unable to be made on more specific elements of the project.

## **POPLAR**

**Lead: SHERIFA – PROGRAMME MANAGER**

**Participant centres:  
Poplar Play  
Robin Hood Garden Parents and Toddler's groups  
Bumble Bees Stay and Play Toy Library  
Mayflower Nursery**

Poplar SureStart joined the project towards the end following an open day attended by Half Moon to launch the new SureStart area. We agreed to work with four groups. All of whom attended a performance at Half Moon and after a break of two weeks for the Easter holidays had four weeks of workshops. Each one lasted 45 minutes in response to the feedback from previous groups and centres about the length of the workshop. This shortening proved very successful and participants responded very well within this environment.

Poplar benefited from taking part at the end of the project being able to positively gain from the evaluation that had already taken place between the tutors and groups.

- This was a wonderful introduction to performing arts for the Nursery children and now we can extend their experiences from here. *Mayflower Nursery*

## **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE INVOLVEMENT**

Evaluation forms were given to each participating groups and programme managers so that we could form an educated and fair conclusion about the successfulness of the project and ways to take this project forward into the next cycle. Only in its second year the project has grown from working with one SureStart area (Ocean) and four groups to working in eight areas pan-London with over 30 groups.

### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

- Many suggestions have been made throughout this report about ways to improve this project and ensure that groups have the best experience regardless of whether they are a Drop-in centre or a nursery. This does mean that there is a need to be very flexible and create a different type of workshop for different environments.
- Many of the groups wanted more sessions, by week 4/ 5 the groups had progressed and would have benefited from at least another week.
- Drop-in centres and Toy Libraries should be allocated a series of half hour workshops with the performance at the end. This would allow for unscheduled drop-ins and attention could be maintained for a shorter time plus offering each session a sense of completion.
- Nurseries and more established groups would have the performance at the beginning of the project and the following workshops would build on the theatrical experience.
- Communication between groups and Half Moon needs to be established from the very beginning to ensure that there is minimal confusion regarding workshop schedules, times and dates. This would also enable any questions or queries to be answered efficiently and immediately. There is a need to balance the importance of Surestart leaders to have a sound knowledge and overview of the project to fit it into the myriad of other things that their groups are experiencing and their lack of time to undertake the communication/liaison that is needed across so many groups.
- The length of the workshop should last for a maximum of 45 minutes.
- The use of music (live music is the ideal) is essential as it really helped to enhance the experience for all those involved. It was calming and at times energetic and when the children heard the music in the show after hearing the music in the workshops there was a sense of recognition.

In conclusion, overall the project was very successful for all those involved and in identifying the weaker areas we can continue to move forward and create an experience that everyone can benefit from regardless of age, ability, experience, and knowledge of theatre. It is an inclusive project and relies on the enthusiasm of the workers and participants to make it work and as long as we have this we can continue to develop and grow our work within the Early Years Sector.

If you have any questions or require further information about the SureStart and Half Moon project please do not hesitate to contact me in any of the following ways:

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## **APPENDIX**

- Production programme
- Illustrated book
- Examples of photographs
- Evaluation forms