

Longsight



A Sure Start Children's Centre

Managed by Big Life Families

**Celebrating 10 Years**





  
**SureStart**



## Sure Start Longsight, Celebrating 10 Years

In 1998 the Government announced a new initiative - **Sure Start** - aimed at providing intensive support to families with children up to four years of age living in the most deprived areas of England.

The early Sure Start programmes focused on relatively small areas of high need and received a significant level of funding. They had a strong emphasis on local autonomy, with programmes developing 'management boards' which included a high representation of local parents and community groups. The programme encouraged innovation and this, coupled with the levels of funding, enabled communities to find new solutions to the challenges they faced.

In Longsight, Manchester, a group of health visitors, parents, voluntary groups and regeneration staff came together to look at the provision of health services for under fives in the area. The campaigning work of the group resulted in Longsight being identified as a Sure Start area.

Local parents worked with schools, health visitors and voluntary projects to make key decisions, including who the 'lead agency' would be. The partnership felt strongly that it wanted a third sector organisation to be the lead agency, because they believed it would be closer to the community and have a better understanding of the local area. After consultation, they decided that Big Life Families (part of The Big Life group) would take on the lead role for Sure Start Longsight.

2011 marked the 10th anniversary of Sure Start Longsight, which was awarded 'Outstanding' by OFSTED in the same year. It continues to be managed and delivered by Big Life Families.

This book tells the story of Sure Start Longsight, who it works with, how it reaches the communities who need it most, and the difference the centre has made to the lives of families living in the area.

**“Sure Start aimed to work with parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of children - particularly those who are disadvantaged - to make sure they are ready to thrive when they get to school.”**

(Glass, 1999, p.258)

# IN THE LAST YEAR 9,195 PEOPLE VISITED THE LONGSIGHT CHILDREN'S CENTRE. ON AVERAGE 838 CHILDREN VISIT THE CENTRE AT LEAST THREE TIMES EVERY YEAR.

**Sure Start Longsight provides a base for all the Sure Start Programme services and has an IT suite, café, 46 place day nursery, workshop rooms, and a community garden. It is the heart of the local community, providing a meeting place for families and access to much needed services.**

The Centre was opened in 2004 and funded by the Sure Start Capital grant, ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), NOF (Neighbourhood Nursery Funding) and MANCAT.

The centre was designed through a series of workshops with staff, volunteers and local families and as a result the building is spacious, welcoming and accessible. Local people feel pride in the centre and ownership of it. In order to maintain interest in the centre whilst it was being built, and encourage new families to get involved, we ran a series of tile decorating workshops and the tiles are now fixtures in the building.

The nursery garden was designed with local children and includes a number of "Telly Tubby" humps and a racetrack. A community garden was designed and developed with the Probation Service

and local parents. It includes a butterfly garden and water feature and is well used by local families who continue to maintain it, gaining new skills along the way.

**Sure Start Longsight is a purpose built Children's Centre providing a range of services, including services delivered by partner agencies:**

- Antenatal check ups
- Baby Clinic
- Birth Registrations
- Blossom Group:  
Self-help group for young mums
- CAB Advice Session:  
Manchester Community Outreach & Advice Partnership
- CAPs Clinic  
Parenting advice and support
- Day Nursery

- Development Through Play Sessions  
Support for children with additional needs led by SENCO worker and Pre-School Special Needs Service
- Eight-month and Two Year Health Checks
- Family Support Drop-in
- 40 Weekers Club parenting sessions
- IT Suite  
Including 1 to 1 sessions in basic IT for beginners
- Midwife service
- Outreach Drop-ins  
Information about what's available locally
- Shapla Group:  
Bengali Women's Group
- Stay 'n' Play sessions  
Arts & Crafts, storytelling and outdoor play for under 5's and thier parents
- Volunteer Gardening Group
- Weaning Group

## A funny thing happened along the way...

When we first looked at finding a base for the Children's Centre we knew we faced difficulties with very limited land available in the area. So we looked at existing buildings including a local primary school that was due for closure. We met with the diocese, the school and architects, and arranged for a study to be carried out on the school to see if it would meet the needs of the families and services. After some weeks the study came back for the Board to consider.

The day of the Board meeting we all looked at the plans and decided it was great and would mean a centre could open much sooner than first anticipated. As we sat congratulating everyone on a job well done there was a knock on the door - someone popped their head around to ask if we knew the school had been demolished...

We learnt from this the importance of having a plan B and moved on to build our lovely, purpose built centre on the demolished site!



*Construction of Sure Start Longsight*

## Centre activities and outreach

Sure Start Longsight delivers a range of activities and outreach services including home visiting, child development sessions, child focused play sessions, parenting courses, women's groups and support groups.

We engage families in services by acting as a main point of contact and ensuring families know what services are available. Staff undertake assessments for home safety equipment and consult local parents on services needed in the area. They deliver a range of self help groups including **Little Steps** (a group to help parents play with their babies), **Stay and Play** (drop-in play sessions for parents and toddlers), the **Shapla group** (for Bengali women), and the **Blossom group** (for young mothers) as well as targeted groups for individuals in the area who may find it harder to access services, such as the Roma community.

**“In 2005 I lost my third child. I woke up from a coma, I had an illness called Encephalitis. I also lost my memory. It was very hard for me because I had two other children at home to look after. When I came out of hospital Sure Start helped me with everything, I did not know where to go or what help I needed, with my children or for myself. In 2006 I gave birth to a little girl and now I feel a lot better. I still have a long way to go in terms of my illness. I owe it to Sure Start. They have given me back my life and I feel much happier - I love myself more. I have now taken part in IT courses and also the parent survival course, the family support workers have helped me with my bills, and many other issues.**

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH!”**

Kate

**EACH YEAR 1,050  
PARENTS AND CARERS  
USE SERVICES AT THE  
CENTRE, WITH EACH  
PARENT ATTENDING AN  
AVERAGE OF 24 TIMES.**



# Early Intervention Services

We provide family support to vulnerable families across central Manchester. The service aims to prevent families from reaching crisis point and children going into the care system. We provide support with issues such as domestic abuse, housing, debt and immigration. Every child has a pre-CAF assessment (Common Assessment Framework), which informs an action plan to address the family's needs.

The team works closely with partner agencies, providing signposting and advocacy to help families access a package of services tailored to their needs. The team also work with social workers to provide support to families with high levels of need.

**“I came to Sure Start in September 2009. I needed help because my husband was hitting me. I was frightened because the children sometimes used to see him hit me. I was having difficulty sleeping and I felt stressed. I went to my GP who said he would give me some tablets to help but I didn't want to take any medication. I spoke to the family support worker at Sure Start Longsight; she said that she would support me. She said that she could get me a place of safety away from my husband if that is what I wanted. I said I would think about it because my husband was kind to my daughters. The family support worker encouraged me to attend the stay and play session with my younger daughter.**

**Then, one day, I decided I could no longer live with my husband, he had hit me again and I had a bruise on my face. I went to Sure Start and spoke to my family support worker. She referred me to Women's Aid for a place of safety for me and the children. Now I'm living away from my husband and my children are more settled and happy.**

**My family support worker gave me advice about the Parents Survival course that takes place at my daughter's school. I am enjoying the course and I feel much happier.” Anita**



**IN THE LAST YEAR WE  
UNDERTOOK 79 PRE-  
CAF ASSESSMENTS,  
SUPPORTED 85  
FAMILIES AND  
SUPPORTED 3  
CHILDREN BEING  
REMOVED FROM THE  
CHILD PROTECTION  
REGISTER.**



# Volunteering, Employability and Training

Sure Start Longsight's volunteering programme has been a huge success, targeting families furthest from the job market, giving them extra support to remove the barriers preventing them from taking up volunteering, training or returning to work.

Volunteering has been a key feature of Sure Start Longsight. Our initial consultation with local parents was carried out by a group of volunteers and, today, volunteers can be found in the centre every day of the week providing a whole range of support services from reception cover to family support, nursery support, outreach and running self help groups.

The centre offers a seven week training session for volunteers which leads to an NVQ qualification, covering topics including: communication skills, equal opportunities and discrimination, boundaries and child protection. One of the barriers to local people volunteering was lack of childcare and in 2008 we were able to secure funds to cover volunteers' childcare costs.

**"I am a volunteer at Sure Start Longsight Children's Centre and have been volunteering for about two and a half years. I have three children aged 15, 12 and 8, I'm also a full time carer.**

**I was a victim of domestic violence for many years. I suffered from total isolation and had no support, no friends and had become very ill. Many years later when my children grew up, and after a long battle with my husband, I started volunteering at a school for two afternoons a week. Initially it was very hard to juggle cooking, cleaning the house and at times, even getting ready to go out felt like a struggle. But it was easier knowing I was volunteering.**

**After a year I was ready to do more. That's when I started volunteering with Sure Start. In October 2008 I changed my volunteering placement to join the family support team at Sure Start Longsight. I was given a great opportunity to run a self help group named Blossom Group. This put the final touch to my life. Emotions were the one thing that had not let**

**go of me since the domestic violence. Memories of the domestic violence would upset me. I kept thinking how much of my life had been wasted, why I had to go through this. I could have done better things in life.**

**Blossom group enabled me to take the lid off my emotions and let off steam. I started to build up trust with people. It's nice for others to see and talk with someone who has had a similar experience. It took a lot of guts and time for me to talk about my bad days in life with the Blossom group.**

**Today I am happy to talk about my experiences, volunteering has helped me to tackle my social isolation, boosted my confidence and enabled me to gain new skills and experiences.**

**Volunteering has helped me to challenge myself and share my passion; the experience of volunteering within Sure Start has enabled me to rediscover talents which I thought I had forgotten."** Tanzeela

**EACH YEAR THE CENTRE  
WORKS WITH AN  
AVERAGE OF 30  
VOLUNTEERS WITH 30%  
MOVING INTO  
EMPLOYMENT IN THE  
LAST YEAR.**





## ON AVERAGE WE SUPPORT 10 PARENTS BACK INTO WORK AND 30 PARENTS TO ACHIEVE AN NVQ LEVEL 2 QUALIFICATION EACH YEAR.

The Sure Start Longsight children's Centre offers a range of training covering both vocational and non-vocational courses such as English as a Second Language, Introduction to Computers, and Food Hygiene. In partnership with other agencies the centre also offers employment services which include help with writing CV's and applications, and job skills workshops. We offer placements in our day nursery for local people to train for NVQ Childcare and Education qualifications – level 2 and 3. This has been very successful, with trainees employed as bank staff or in the mobile crèche service when they have qualified.

Big Life Families believes employment is one of the key opportunities we can offer to the local community and therefore aim to recruit staff from the communities in which we work. In Sure Start Longsight 78% of the staff live locally (within a two mile radius of the centre) and 62% of staff have been with us for over five years. Living locally means that staff understand the issues families in the community face, and the barriers which stop them accessing services. Staff have a great understanding of the cultures locally with 77% being BME and speaking seven of the languages used in the community.

**“I had two kids, they were both little and I couldn't work because I had no childcare so I started bringing the kids to stay and play session at Sure Start Longsight - that's how I got to know the centre and their services. I started volunteering at the centre because this is the only centre that provides a crèche for the children of the volunteers.**

**I started volunteering in the nursery, on reception and doing outreach and I got experience in all three fields and became really confident in my job. The centre offered me a bank staff receptionist place. After couple of months they needed a maternity cover for reception, I applied and got the job, and while I was doing this a permanent post came up - I'm now a permanent member of the reception team.**

**The Centre has definitely made a big difference in our lives, I would definitely recommend Sure Start Longsight to people. I was new in the country and didn't know much about the area or the services and how they could benefit me and my family.**

**If a mum with kids hasn't got a nursery place, it's good for them to come to these kinds of sessions so they can learn and get used to interacting with other children. If you're volunteering within the centre you don't have to worry about their childcare and, the most important thing is, you get a really good reference for your CV by volunteering. Alongside this, all the workers and staff are really helpful in every way, whether that's with education, family support, courses, or your child's development. I'm starting my law degree this year because I had all my education from Pakistan and I wanted to study further. I didn't know where to go, what to do or how to apply - the Training Co-ordinator helped me to apply for the course.” Humera**

# Aisha Daycare

Aisha provides a 46 place day care service in the Children's Centre for parents who are working or training. It offers free places for three year olds with some free sessions for two year olds. The day nursery supports parents to access the benefits they are entitled to and ensures that children have access to the Early Years Foundation Stage which helps children thrive once they reach school. We work in partnership with agencies including the Pre School Special Needs Service, offering places for children with additional needs, and the Childcare Commissioning Team to enable access for the families most in need. The nursery also invests in the local community by offering training placements and employing local people. Many trainees have gone on to be employed with us and get NVQs in Childcare and Education.

Aisha also deliver a Mobile Crèche Service to all Children's Centres in Central Manchester. The crèche is designed to give children a free quality environment and learning opportunity whilst their parents access a range of services in Central Manchester Children Centres.

**"I live in Longsight with my partner and my three lovely children. I am currently a volunteer working in the Aisha nursery at Sure Start Longsight Children's Centre.**

**I heard about Sure Start in Longsight when I gave birth to my daughter in 2007. I was told that I could register her birth at the centre. At the registration I joined Sure Start and was handed a newsletter, later I read the newsletter and found out about a volunteer course that was going on.**

**I called the organiser and I was given a place on the course. I was also given a crèche place for my daughter. The course was 10 weeks long and during it the organiser and the family support team really helped support me and my family with some problems that I faced whilst on the course.**

**After I finished the volunteering course I started my placement in the Aisha nursery. I then decided to study - Sure Start staff encouraged me to enrol on a NVQ level 2 in Childcare Learning and Development. I have finished the course now and am starting NVQ level 3. By the time that I finish my NVQ course I will be able to work as a nursery officer."** Deborah

**93% OF CHILDREN  
ACCESSING THE CENTRE  
ARE FROM BME  
COMMUNITIES.**



# Working With The Community

Sure Start Longsight aimed to encourage innovation and put local people at the heart of the services it delivered. We started from the premise that if mainstream services were addressing all the needs of local families then there would be no need for Sure Start. We set about developing a programme of services, by identifying a group of local parents, training them up in interview techniques and tasking them with interviewing five of their neighbours. From this exercise we got over 50 questionnaires completed, indicating the key issues affecting families locally; what they felt was missing and what people felt would make a difference to their lives.

From then on parents have remained involved in Sure Start Longsight governance. Parents have helped develop the parental involvement strategy and are members of the Advisory Group and Parents Voice group - which provides feedback on centre services and produces its own newsletter about the centre.

**Fathers** We have ensured that we engage with all parts of the community, particularly those who are hard to reach. In 2003 we felt that fathers were under-represented in our services. Many were working unsociable hours and found it hard to access services as they tended to sleep during the day to do shift work at night. Some didn't feel comfortable entering the building when they saw mainly women attending. We decided to offer a free family trip to Camelot – believing that we would have a captive audience of fathers on board the coach for a couple of hours which would give us a good opportunity to build relationships with them. We held an event at the Library and invited local families to come along and register for the trip. Nothing could have prepared us for what was about to happen - almost 400 people put their name down for the trip and needless to say, not only did we have a fantastic day out but we built lasting relationships with families!

**Community parents** One particular challenge we faced, based on feedback from families, was how to deliver health services differently. The community strongly supported a model used in Bangladesh where local women were trained and travelled

between villages giving health information and advice in an accessible and non intimidating way. We researched this model and thought it would work brilliantly as the local community were predominantly from South East Asia and this model would overcome the language and cultural barriers identified by parents as a major barrier to accessing services. Local health professionals, however, were not as enthusiastic and many felt that only qualified health professionals should be giving advice to parents.

This challenge coincided with a group of local workers planning a trip to Bangladesh - it was on this trip that they saw the model we were interested in. Two of the workers on the trip were the local health visitors who had been instrumental in bringing Sure Start to the area. They came back full of enthusiasm for the model and with this support the 'community parents' scheme was created. The scheme employed and trained local parents as 'para-professionals' working dually with Sure Start and the health visiting team. From the very start this made a real difference to the numbers of families accessing health services locally.



"I don't know what I would have done without Sure Start Longsight. My support worker has been really supportive; she has done everything she said she would.

The home visits have been great, showing me that she is there for me and my family. When things got a little difficult, she never gave up, but found other ways of dealing with it.

All I can say is, if that support and service was not there, I don't know what I would have done.

Just want to say thanks for all the support and help you have given me and my family." Steven



**Roma Community** In 2007 European Economic Area nationals (including Romanians) became able to live in England. Following this an increasing number of Roma began to settle in a concentrated areas of private rented accommodation in South Gorton, a ward neighbouring Longsight. Hostility towards the Roma community from residents and some agencies began to grow, with the Roma blamed for much of the anti-social behaviour in the area.

Sure Start Longsight outreach team worked with small numbers of Roma families. They identified that many were living in poverty with issues including overcrowding, lack of basic furniture, lack of access to health services, training and employment advice and a lack of school places for children.

Working in partnership with local organisations, schools, the Council and health services and with funding from The Big Issue in the North Trust, Sure Start Longsight led a Community Cohesion project which aimed to improve community relations in the area; increase the number of Roma families engaging with services; support the Roma community to develop their skills and to find income streams to sustain their families better; and improve their quality of life. The project also aimed to create role models within the Roma community to raise people's aspirations.

**“I came to England in 2009. I wanted more from my life in Romania, I didn't go to school and looked after my brothers and sisters. When I came to Manchester I started selling The Big Issue in the North to earn money.**

**My English was getting better and I really wanted to get a job. The Big Issue office put me in touch with Sure Start Longsight and told me about a project they were doing with the Roma community. Since then I've done lots of training at the centre like ESOL, a course on being self employed, dental health, child protection, mentoring and outreach worker training.**

**I wanted to achieve employment, to give Roma people confidence in the English system by giving them an example. Seeing me do it makes them believe they can do it. This builds hope for them and opens up the future for them and their children. It shows them there's hope for their families in this country.**

**Now I work as an outreach worker. I meet people every day for advice. The phone doesn't stop ringing. People ask me questions and I help them know which services they can access, I help them read information that doctors have given them.**

**I give people advice on employment, benefits, how to access health services. I translate information for people, help people fill in forms. I work in schools with Roma children making sure they understand their homework and feel supported.**

**When I first started working with Sure Start I felt happy and I had faith in myself that I had the knowledge and skills. I had a beautiful smile on my face every day. I don't want people to be scared, I want them to have confidence in people no matter what race they are. In the future – I want to convince my mum to come and stay for a month and see how much I have achieved. I want to support them financially even more, I want to work more.**

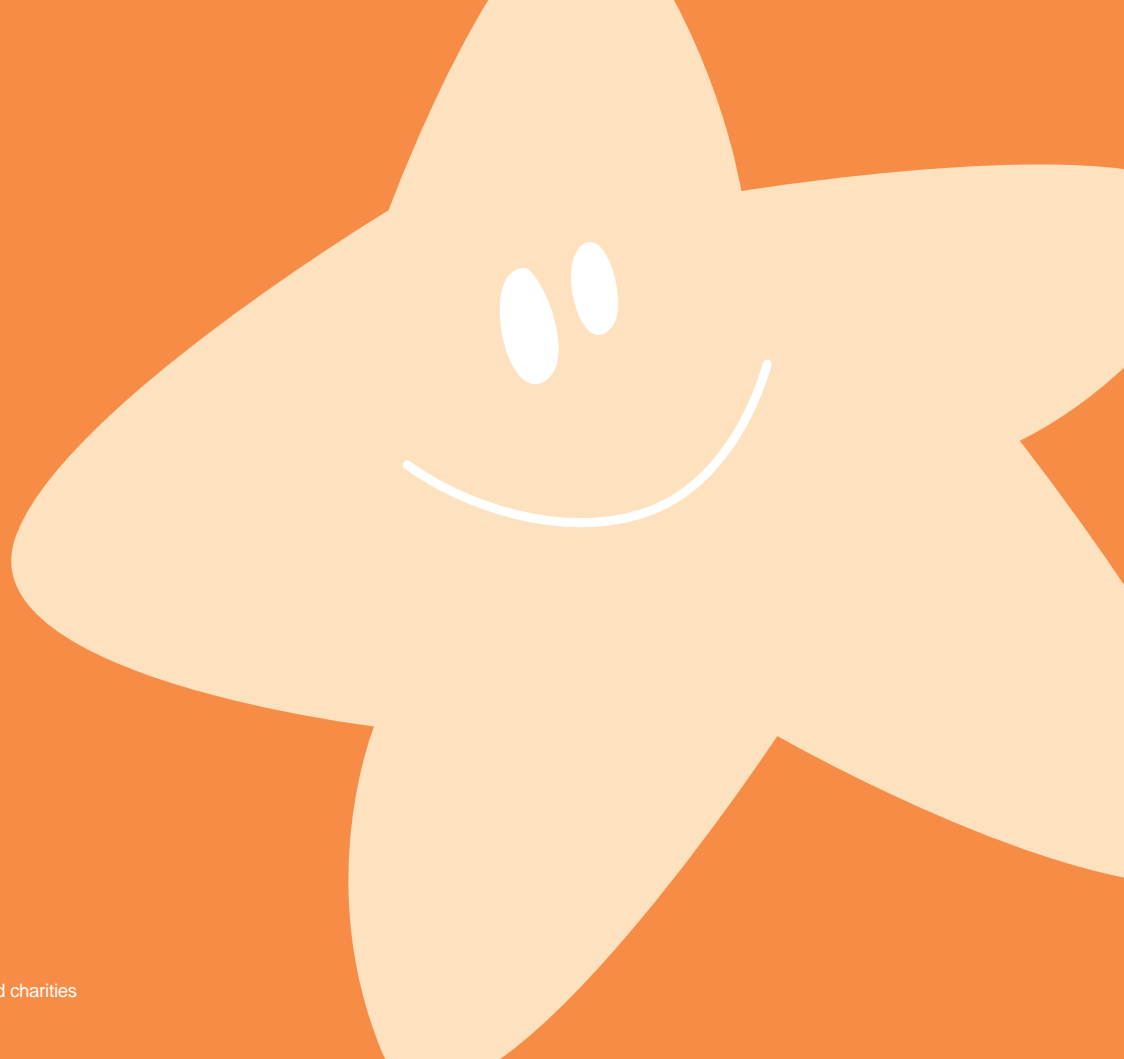
**Not having this job would be like someone taking a part of me. It's not just about the work, it's about the friends I have made. This project gives people a chance and helps people make changes and when people are being given chances they are taking them.” Ramona**

**IN THE LAST YEAR THE ROMA PROJECT HELPED 5 ROMA PEOPLE UNDERTAKE TRAINING, ACHIEVE A QUALIFICATION OR MOVE INTO EMPLOYMENT.**





# BigLife Families



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Sure Start Longsight Children's Centre is managed by Big Life Families... part of The Big Life group of social businesses and charities