

Summary of findings for Northam Community Centre – Community Needs Assessment

September 2016

A total of 103 respondents took part in the Community Needs Assessment and they were carried out using 3 different approaches. Firstly, existing Centre users were asked to complete a questionnaire and from this source 29 were returned. Secondly, West Itchen Community Trust went door to door asking local residents on their doorsteps and this returned 58 questionnaires. Finally, a fun day was held on Saturday 5th March and a further 16 were completed.

Summary of main points from the questionnaire:

- More than half of all respondents to the questionnaire didn't use the Centre at all.
- More tellingly over 95% of the respondents asked on the doorstep, didn't use the Centre and awareness of activities was very low.
- 21% of respondents' access existing services from the Centre, primarily Sure Start or Start Point
- 9% of respondents actually run activities from the Centre

Once you look in more detail at the satisfaction levels of existing users, it becomes clear that the vast majority of respondents are either happy or satisfied with the Centre's features. The following points stand out:

- Parking, Lighting, Security, disabled access attracted the highest number of responses that were mainly happy. Followed by cleanliness and the range of activities.
- External appearance and interior décor attracted the most responses that were "It's OK" more as opposed to "happy" which highlights that while users are mainly happy with the Centre on the whole, it's definitely viewed as looking tired and in need of a refresh.

For non-users its very clear that the biggest problem is awareness

- 55 out of 56 respondents don't use the Centre because they don't know what's available there
- 12% of those respondents didn't actually know where the Centre is.

On rating the Centre out of 10 its clear that most existing users are more than satisfied. This question attracted 59 responses

- Almost 70% of respondents gave scores of 7 to 10 out of 10.
- Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) gave the Centre 10 out of 10
- No users gave the Centre less than 3 and only 3 respondents gave the Centre less than 5 out of 10, representing 5%.

The Centre shows potential for attracting a much wider range of users, but it would need to increase its offering or raise awareness in order to do so:

- The highest demand is for children's activities attracting 60% of the responses
- Sports and fitness classes are popular with 53%
- Over half of the respondents suggested they would like to attend skills or learning activities
- The next highest choice was Health/Advice clinics, attracting 45%

Recommendations

1. Raising awareness of the Centre and the activities currently available is essential. Over 30% of people that completed the questionnaire would like to see youth services running from the Centre, despite the fact that there are youth sessions already available.
2. While potential is high for various activities, the largest problem with running new sessions and services is that quite often, people expect them to be free. Raising funds for pilot projects is straightforward, but sustainability is key to both developing community and the long-term future of the Centre.
3. Delivering more community open days from the Centre in the near future is important in order to gain momentum and to spark community interest in the building and how it's run. The event held on 5th of March was organised at very short notice, but was well attended with between 130-150 people throughout a 3-hour period.
4. More community based and community focused organisations need to be attracted to operate out of the Centre, to deliver services, workshops, training or social events.
5. Southampton City Council are keen to run employment workshops from Northam Community Centre and that fits well with local community need the viability of this new proposal needs to be explored quickly.
6. Some investment into giving the Centre a fresh look in the short term is essential. West Itchen Community Trust often run housekeeping days, with its existing staff team, where they undertake tasks such as painting and decorating of the interiors to keep the community rooms fresh and clean. This approach could be taken here, or the Steering Group could look to attract business volunteers through corporate social responsibility schemes.
7. West Itchen Community Trust will continue to use its team of community organisers in the area to maintain and increase awareness of the Centre and what's on offer.
8. WICTs Property Manager will survey the building inside and out in order to develop a maintenance schedule for the property.
9. The existing youth provision needs to be explored as to whether more flexibility for the youth block is available. Currently there are only 1 or 2 sessions that run per week from quite a large space and that space could be utilised more effectively. This will help with both sustainability of the Centre and potentially the existing offer which is currently grant reliant.
10. With agreement from the steering group, WICT will look into delivering its own free training services that it currently runs from the Ropewalk Centre into the Northam Community Centre to see how the local community respond to those opportunities. This includes, business and social enterprise training and capacity building to help establish new community groups.