

Ocean Estate

Residents Consultation 2007

Prepared by



Aston-Mansfield

Generating community wealth for social change

Community Involvement Unit

Ocean Estate – Resident consultation

Background

As part of the wider consultation on Community facilities on the Ocean Estate Aston-Mansfield were asked to carry out a resident consultation programme. This was done in association with the main contractor Tribal.

The timescale had to fit in with a much wider agenda and as a result was too tight for a broad resident consultation. In recent years, there had been a number of consultations about the future of the estate and the shape of future developments and it was therefore decided to target this consultation to two sectors of the community who may become key users of community facilities but whose views have not been sought exclusively in the past. The target areas chosen were women and young people in the 11 – 13 age group.

The broad research questions were developed and agreed with Tribal so that the two parts of the consultation were able to compare and contrast findings and give a cohesive final report.

The work centred around the following areas:

- ❖ Activities that a respondent would use in a community facility
- ❖ The days and times when a respondent would access a community facility
- ❖ What would be the barriers to using a particular community facility.

As the project progressed we were asked to consider a wider consultation that might reach older people and give others an opportunity to comment. With a mind on the time and funding constraints it was decided to carry out a postal survey where “freepost” postcards with the above questions on were left at public venues. To encourage responses a free draw was added as an incentive to return the postcard promptly.

We were also asked by the NDC if we could use work carried out by young people on the estate during a summer scheme that focused on views on the estate and how they would like it changed. We have no details on the respondents nor the process used to produce the findings but have analysed the work and included it in this report.

Methodology

Young people

We were aware that decisions that this research may inform will take a number of years to implement. We therefore wanted to ensure that any young people's consultation would have positive results for the people taking part.

Although previous consultations and listening events may have consulted with young people, very few consulted with young people who are today's 11 to 13 years old but will be the main youth age (13 to 15 years old) in two years time when changes have been made.

Our approach to this consultation was not to work within an organisation that have young people attending, but to contact those young people who meet on the streets.

To find out where young people meet we tried to make contact with 11 to 13 year old who attend existing provision. It proved to be very difficult to find any existing provision for this age group.

Talking to 11 to 13 year olds on the estate confirmed this. Future development should consider youth provision in different age bands which fall in line with the governments ten-year youth plan.

Our research used a structured interview with young people and covered two key points

- 1) When do young people think that activities and youth activity should be available and how much spare time do they think they will have in two years time.
- 2) For young people to rank a list of mainstream activities in order of preference and to suggest activities that are not listed.

As the young people we were targeting were not in any formal youth provision we did not ask about barriers to use.

Client profile :

- 93 young people between the ages 11 to 13 where interviewed on a 1:1 basis
- The gender break down of respondents mirrors the gender breakdown of young people using a youth recognised provision ie 80% male:20% female
- All the interviewees were residents within the NDC area
- All interviews were conducted on the street and public places
- Interviews conducted over three days, three evening sessions, two lunch time and after school sessions

The field work was carried out using youth workers and community development staff. Staff used reflected the ethnic diversity of the area.

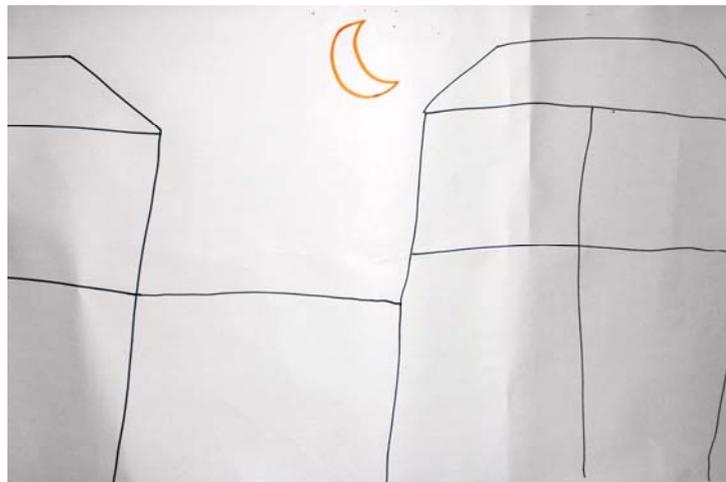
Women

Our own experience of running community facilities tells us that the majority of daytime users are female. Women are also often key to providing information on community activities and facilities to their own families. It was therefore felt important to gain the view of these community gatekeepers.

Our approach was to speak with women in a familiar environment. We wanted to choose women who were already accessing events and facilities and could therefore give informed views on how these could be extended and improved rather than starting with a blank canvas that could become more of a wish list.

With the high incidence of women who don't have English as their first language we designed a research technique that didn't require a high level of literacy but still enabled views to be collected. We also used field workers who had another community language or were accustomed to working with people whose first language is not English. Both field workers in this part of the research were women.

The methodology used allowed the women to annotate a large diagram of a community building and outdoor space with activities and facilities they would like to see available.



They were then asked to give the times and days that they would consider using these facilities and to outline any barriers to use.

Two sessions were held at the Ocean women's centre at the Food Co-op and at the Sewing group.

A session was held at the Parents Advice Centre to coincide with the Bangladeshi parents drop in session.

We took part in the estate Big Draw event and spoke to a number of women at this event. The findings have been included as part of the women's consultation.

Community Events

There has been a number of activities organised on the estate by the NDC that have enabled the children and families to think about the facilities available on their estate.

We were asked if any of these events could be of use to us in the resident research or if any of the work produced could inform findings.

We took up both offers.

1. The summer scheme on the estate had asked participants what they would like to change on their estate / what they would need. It also asked young people to mark on a map the streets they knew or used.

2. The Big Draw event in September 2007 was organising an activity aimed at children in a square on the estate. We used the research methodology devised for the women's research to this event and allowed children and their parents to take part.

The Big Draw event was well attended and a number of children took part sharing their views. The children were aged under 10 and were accompanied by their parents. The majority of children were girls.

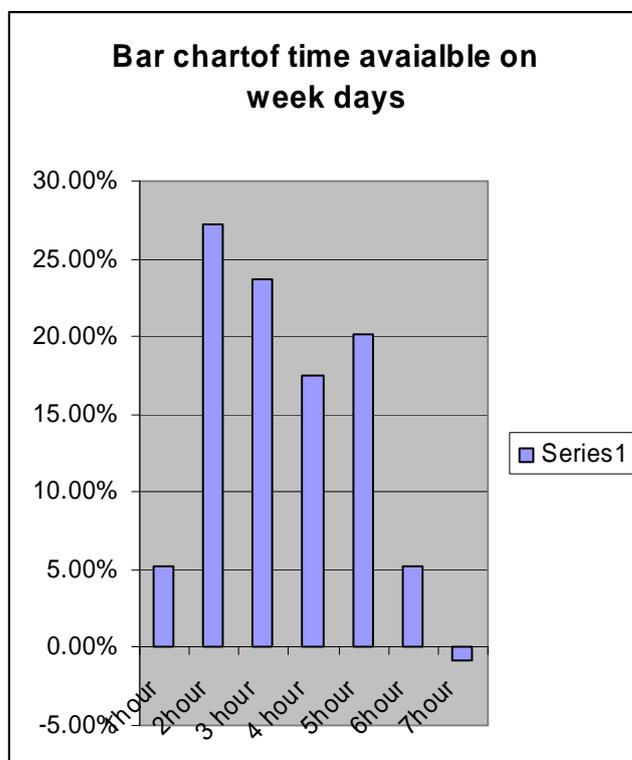
Findings

Young People

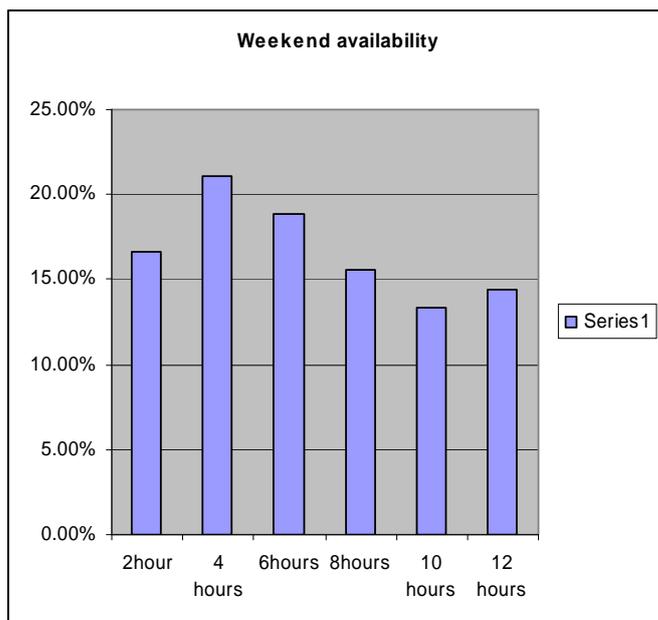
In response to the question – When do young people think that activities and youth activity should be available and how much spare time do they think they will have in two years time.

The questionnaire asked young people how many hours spare time they would have each day during the week (Monday to Friday)

The majority of young people thought that they would have between 2 to 5 hours each day between Monday and Friday to pursue activities. The highest rating being 2 hours each day.



They were then asked how many hours they would have available on either a Saturday or a Sunday. Participants were given a range of answers in 2 hour slots from 2 hours to 12 hours, with an option to write in more. One respondent replied all day the others responded as follows. Most imagined having 4 or 6 hours available The highest rating by a small margin being 4 hours each day.



Young people were then asked what would be the best time for taking part in activities.

1st choice weekends (chosen by 44 participants)

2nd choice daytime (chosen by 25 participants)

3rd choice evenings (chosen by 24 participants)

NB. daytime was generally clarified as after school.

The questionnaire then asked suggest an activity / pastime that they would like to do in a community facility when they are 15.

The results were varied

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Taekwondo | Running | Badminton |
| Kickboxing | Designing | Dancing |
| Swimming | Table tennis | Street dance |
| Climbing Day | Trips | |
| Paintballing | Movies | |
| Bowling | Cricket | |
| Music | Sports | |
| Cooking | Netball | |
| Karate | Beauty | |
| Basketball | Tennis | |
| Rollerskating | DJ workshop | |
| Arts | Drama | |
| Computer Games | Football | |

The questionnaire then listed a range of activities available in most youth facilities and the young people were asked to choose the top five activities they would like to take part in. The results of the top five were as follows.

	Activity	Number of times chosen
1	Football	62
2	Bowling	50
3	Poetry	45
4	Arts and craft	31
5	Dance	23 [when street dance is added (that was chosen 16 times) this moves dance to 3 rd place]

Women

Using the drawing of an empty community building and outdoor space women were asked how they would like to see this filled.

Inside the building there were a mixture of different size and types of rooms that could be filled with classes and activities. The results were as follows.

Women

Sewing classes
 English classes
 IT courses – with certification
 Advice sessions (benefits etc)
 Exercise / Keep fit
 Massage sessions
 Job search & interview skills
 Place to sit and talk / meet

Children

Homework clubs (mixed & same sex)
 Outings / Day trips (with women)
 Children's activities
 Martial arts classes

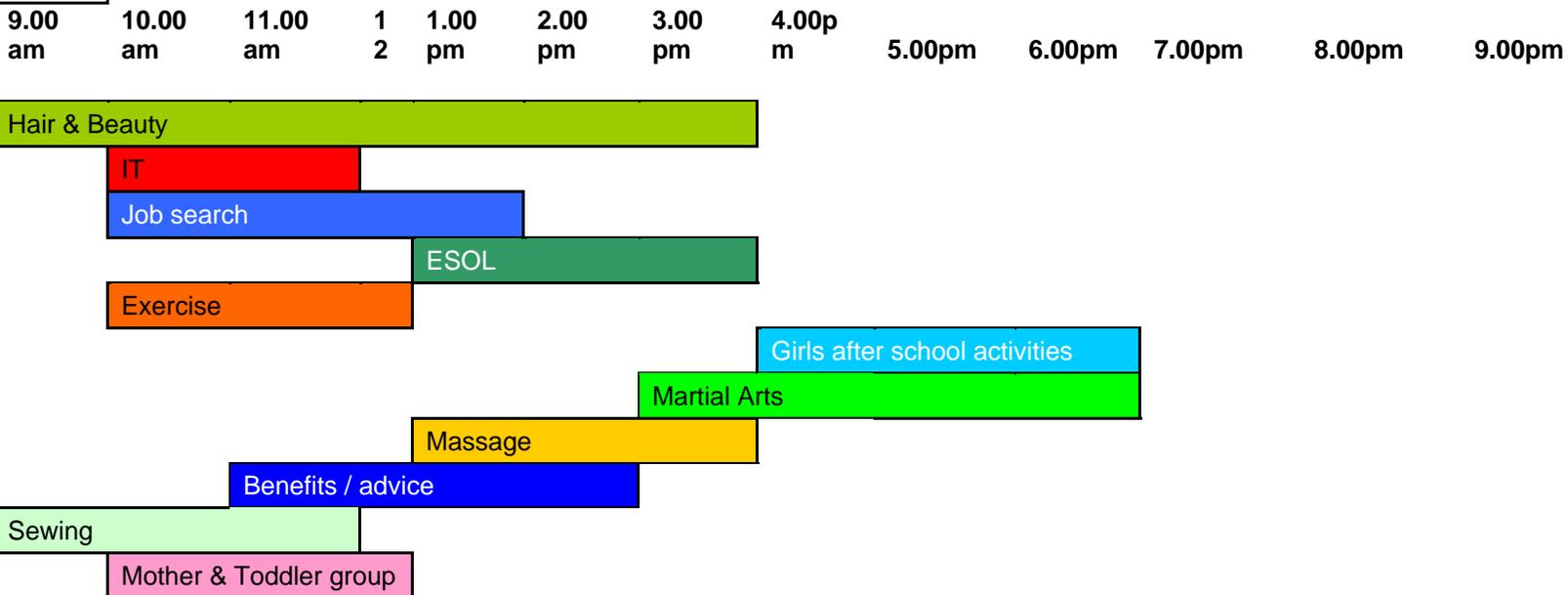
There was also a desire for leisure centre activities but in women's only environment and on the estate. These included swimming, sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi.

Outdoors there was a request for gardening.

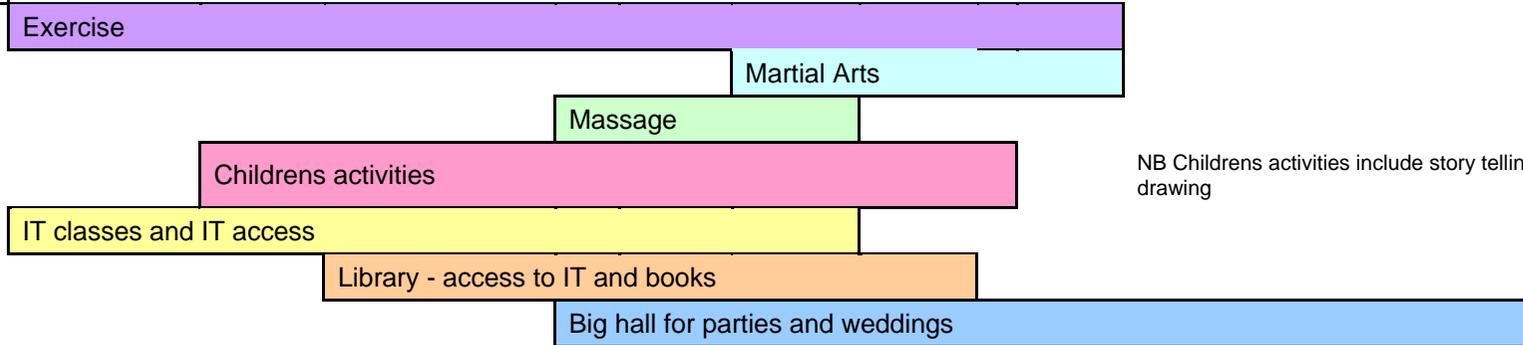
We then asked the women to think about the times that a community building could be used by various activities. This question had two purposes, one to see if any more activities were thought of in this context and to get an idea of how much time a community facility would be used by this section of the community. At present there are a number of community facilities that are dedicated to various sections of the community we wanted to find out if this was a good use of a building or was there some way in which a building could be used by a wider range of people at different times of the day.

The findings were combined to show a possible time table for a community facility.

Weekday Activities



Weekend activities



NB Childrens activities include story telling, writing & drawing

Outdoor activities





The women generally wanted daytime activities for themselves and after school activities for their children - but only up to 6.00pm. Most wanted weekend activities of about two hour sessions but the availability was spread over a longer period of time.

The final question asked people to think about things that would act as a barrier to using a community facility.

The following were put forward in response to this question.

- Unhelpful staff,
- Unpleasant staff,
- Culturally insensitive people,
- Poor crèche facilities,
- Mixed gender centres,
- Mixed gender sessions,
- An unpleasant environment / atmosphere, and
- No timetable.

The mixed gender issues came from the women's centre sessions and are probably a skewed finding as the respondents were attending a women only environment by their own choice so would naturally see this as an issue for future activities. However that fact that they value the centres single sex sessions and would like them replicated is a valid finding.

The unpleasant environment / atmosphere is a broad statement that respondents had difficulty explaining further but seemed to be about being made welcome and friendly environment that allowed them to feel comfortable.

Talking to staff at the Parents Advice Centre highlighted the point that users had become accustomed to the fact that in this area community facilities targeted a certain group and that you attended a number of facilities depending on your need – so parents would come to one centre, children would attend another centre, faith needs would be met elsewhere and women only activities at the women's centre. They pointed out that without a multi-purpose community centre to refer to, people would not expect to find a number of activities in one place, except possibly in a school. This would need to be considered if a multi purpose centre was to be provided.

Big Draw event

Children were asked to draw activities onto an outline of a community building and open space. They were also asked to explain their drawings to ensure the interpretation was correct. Adults were asked about activities that they would use, when they would be likely to access a community space and what may stop them using a community facility.

Activities for a community building

Trampolining
ESOL classes – in school time for Mums
IT classes
Access to IT and books
Library
Weddings
Parties
Place to learn jobs
Kitchen
Cooking
Television
Comfortable sofas to watch television
Learn typing
Playing and drawing after school
Mother and toddler group – in mornings
Story telling in a library
Meetings to discuss local things and topical issues
Badminton
Table tennis
Someone who can help
A big space for hire on Sundays
Meeting for the elderly to learn about England – shops and buses and things and English
Arabic lessons (it is too crowded in the mosque and not enough teachers)
Community events – like Big Draw
Place to do art all the time

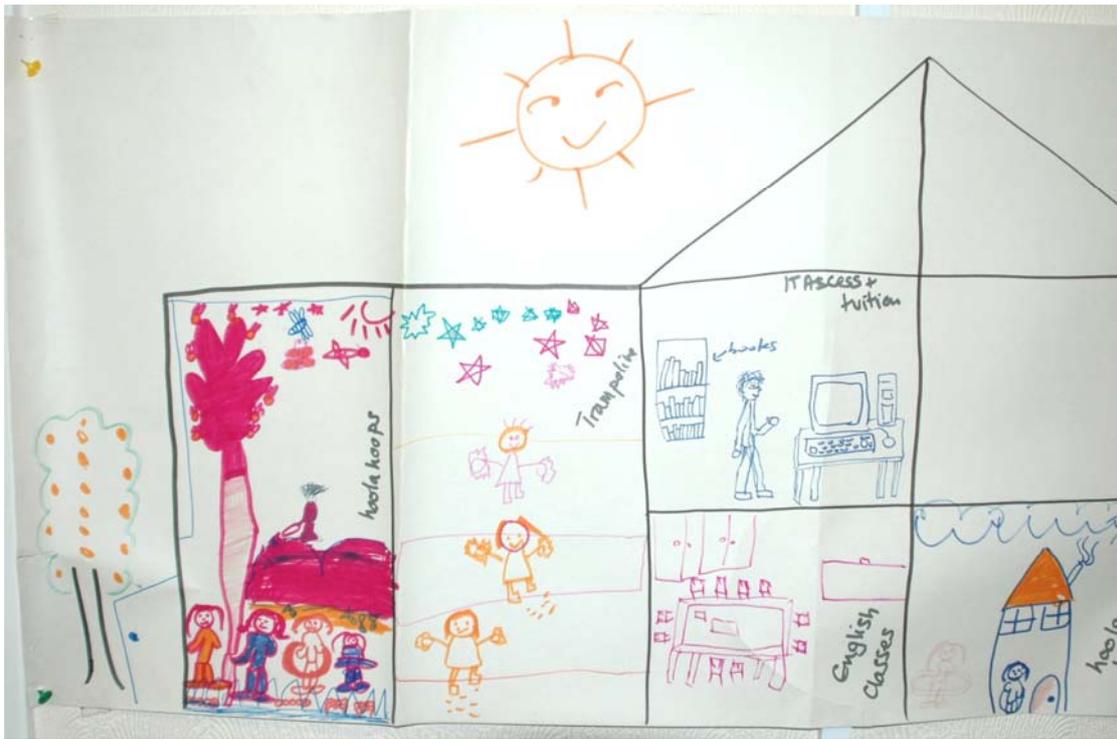
Activities for a community outdoor space

Hoola hoops
Trampolining
Place to ride bike
Swings
Bouncy Castle
Climbing frame
Basket ball }
Football } After school until 5pm and on Sundays
Skateboard }
Seats

Fountain
Skipping
Fruit trees

Possible barriers to using a community facility

Centre that were shut when the community needed them, centres need to be open all day on Saturday and Sunday and every evening from 4pm to 9pm
Unhelpful staff



Portion of the research drawing

Summer scheme run by NDC and the Building Exploratory.

The exercise carried out involved spider diagrams asking participants:

- ❖ what they wanted / what their needs were,
- ❖ What changes they would like to see,
- ❖ And the effects of the above answers

The responses would suggest that the participants were a mixture of children and adults, but no records were kept to confirm this.

What participants wanted / needed

A youth centre
Fast food outlets on the estate
Larger school (John Cass)
Trips (going places and having a laugh)
Bus route from Stepney to Limehouse
A sitting area
A chill out park with flowers
Speed cameras on Ben Johnson Road
Signs / notice board to inform people about what is going on in the area.

A closer leisure centre
Safer estates
Fun day every Sunday

What changes people would like to see

A youth centre
Snooker club
Advice centre for young people
Clean and fix the pitch next to Arbor centre

Attractive buildings
A bigger mosque

The effect of these changes

The area would become more busy
A wider range of people would move into the area
It would be easier to commute
More people would spend money in the shops
More people will know what is happening in the area

Analysis

If we return to the original research questions and analyse the results of the consultation events we can draw up a picture of the desired community facilities and their use on the Ocean Estate.

What do people want from a community facility?

This question has been broken down further to cover indoor and outdoor facilities.

Indoor

In a community building people would like a mixture of organised activities and open access spaces that provide facilities that may or may not be part of an organised programme.

There was a request for spaces that could act as meeting spaces, where people could sit, meet, watch television / films.

There was also a desire for a large space that could be available for hire at weekends for weddings and birthday parties.

Both of these activities would not require organising but the useage would require a level of management to ensure that they are used at the correct time and in an appropriate manner. This can act as a source or relatively low cost revenue for a building but will often lead to misuse if not carefully managed.

A number of the ideas given would require specialist equipment in rooms that, once equipped, would not lend themselves to a wide range of use and could result in a considerable amount of time out of use.

There were requests for an IT room that could be used for formal training in IT that led to a certificate and open access for personal use. This could be combined with the request for a library to be part of a community building or the existing library could consider extending the use of its building for these activities and bring in the story telling and creative writing and poetry.

Art and crafts room. This too could be used for formal sessions or let on a drop in basis. It is interesting to note that art activities in their widest sense were mentioned in all areas of the consultation and that Poetry, arts and craft were in the top five activities named in the young peoples consultation.

Sewing – The existing women's centre does sewing lessons but uses domestic machines in a multi purpose room. It could be that sewing classes could take skills to a level that would allow participants to access employment and gain vocational qualifications, as well as giving people home based sewing skills. This would require a room that was dedicated to this activity and may be better suited to an educational activity who could organise skills acquisition in such a way that the room is in frequent use.

A similar model could be used for hair and beauty sessions.

Kitchen / cookery area. It was unclear whether this would be used as a community facility that could be used by all users of a centre or for classes or to provide a “canteen” type of facility for the community building. With careful management it is possible to have a multi purpose kitchen but it is better to have any large community hall with a small equipped kitchen attached to it.

Sports activities. A wide range of sports and exercise activities were mentioned in the consultation. The indoor facilities required for these would require a large space. Purpose built sports halls have a high ceiling which limits the multi purpose role of these rooms as they are difficult to heat and have bad acoustics for other activities. They also prove expensive to run in a community centre for the same reasons. Teaching sports would require qualified coaches and this may be better placed in a sports centre. However some sports activities could take place in a hall which can also be used as a room for public meetings and parties etc. Martial arts, table tennis, keep fit and yoga could all be delivered by clubs or organised by a community centre in a multi purpose space.

Other activities asked for in the consultation use a number of small to medium sized rooms in a community building. Most will require a leader or tutor.

One of the noticeable gaps in this consultation (but which may have been picked up elsewhere in the research) is the need for community groups to have a place to meet and grow. The advantage of having a range of different size multi purpose rooms is that as the community grows and community organisations are formed they too will be able to use the spaces for their meetings and activities so generating an income for the facility.

Outdoor

The request for outdoor facilities breaks down to those that just provide space outdoors to enjoy and relax in and those that provide opportunities for organised sports.

The exception to this was the request for gardening space the young people wanting fruit trees in the spaces. These two suggestions imply people would like to become more involved in the maintenance of space and invest in an ongoing relationship that results in some gain for the investment. This type of engagement can be found in the City Farm where plots can be hired and people can grow their own produce and volunteers can work on the farm. Whether this has restricted access or the people involved in the consultation were not aware of this is unknown.

The relaxation aspect of outdoor community facilities should include seats, flowers, fountains, swings, climbing frames and space to ride bikes, have bouncy castles, trampolines and a skipping area.

The more organised sports based outdoor facilities could include space for football, basketball, skateboarding. This could be maintained to a high standard so that it is not only available for open access but also able to have coaching sessions and local clubs could use that facilities for events. Bowling, the second choice of the young people would require its own purpose built building rather than being part of a community facility. However a community facility could be incorporated into a commercial bowling facility if the need was great enough.



When would community facilities be used?

The current situation of a number of specialist centres providing activities to a small client group means that there are quite specific opening times for each activity. This is appropriate when you are targeting a section of the community eg mothers - they are generally only available in school time as they have childcare responsibilities at other times. However the benefit of a more general community facility is that as users circumstances or needs change they do not have to move and find a new venue and make new relationships, they can find activities that suit the new needs at the same centre.

The cost of running buildings is high. It not only includes maintenance, heating, lighting and cleaning costs but also staffing. It is therefore more viable to have a building that is open and used for as many hours as possible. The research shows that neither group of respondents could access a building from 9am to 9pm seven days a week but that a community facility should be shared to make it viable. This however is not an easy task. The women involved in the research clearly valued the “women only” environment in which their activities were being held. The young people had clear ideas of their

own space and their own activities and our own experience has shown that youth activities are difficult to mix with other activities as they are often noisy and when a sizable group of young people are involved, they take up a large space.

Looking at the timetables there would seem to be a possibility of shared space. Women/ mothers are looking for daytime use, younger children after school and other events in the evening. This could not only be shared around time but could also involve some zoning within a building. To make it viable however, there would need to be a single management team and support staff to manage this or else there is duplication of functions and events, power battles around resources and numerous difficulties around the running and maintaining the centre. Consideration would also have to be given to gender issues around support staff.

General youth activities only work in a shared environment when they have exclusive use at a given time and do not have to be mindful of noise or organising appropriate activities to fit in with other users. However organised youth activities can work in a community centre with activities like Martial arts or a table tennis club.

Barriers to a well used community facility

There seems to have been an overwhelming feeling that any community facility be managed in harmony with the community and by people who show a deep understanding of the culture and needs of the people using the centre.

This would suggest that there is a single manager or organisation in charge of the facility and that they work closely with the community.

In the consultation there was also a request that the community facility become the hub of a community where one could go for advice or general community events like the Big draw could be held that would bring the whole community together. The Government talks about "Community Anchors" holding communities together and providing a central point in the Quirk Review. Community buildings only achieve this role when they are managed by Community Development staff with the skills to mix and match activities, respond to a communities needs and provide and point of information and signposting in a community.

We believe the difficulty on the Ocean Estate would be bring together a sufficiently diverse mix of activities in one building in order to make the community facility viable. With children's services being currently provided in the Children's centre, women's activities being provided in the Women's centre and a plethora of other community venues providing specialist services any community facility would have to ensure not to duplicate what is already being provided and deliver any activities in such a way that sections of the community were not alienated by delivery style.

It is obvious from the comments about the area and buildings that residents want community facilities that are well kept and fit for purpose so they can feel a sense of pride in the building and invest in its upkeep and future. The young people commented that they would like pitches and open games spaces maintained and youth facilities “smartened up”. Respondents’ at the Women’s centre would like to extend and improve their facilities

Recommendations

“Community anchor organisations with a broad community remit and a multi purpose function can play a powerful role in promoting community cohesion by bridging the ethnic, faith and other divisions that may be present in communities, and promoting mutual understanding and harmony.”

Making Assets Work: *The Quirk Review of community management and ownership of public assets.*

1. In line with the Quirk Review, any community facility that is going to be an asset to the Ocean Estate needs to be designed in such a way that it offers multi-purpose usage that is widely accessible to all sections of the local community. To do so, opportunities need to be managed by experienced Community Development staff who have a deep understanding of the ethnic and cultural needs of the people in the immediate vicinity to the building.

There was an over whelming view among respondents that community facilities were vital to the estate and all showed an enthusiasm to engage in activities within their neighbourhood.

Experienced community development staff can ensure that the range of activities on offer meet the whole communities needs and when they are based in a building can also help toward the financial viability of a building.

2. While much of the interest in community events was for activities that are already available in a regular and organised manner on or around the estate, all sections of the consultation specifically mentioned arts based activities like poetry, dance and art. It would therefore seem sensible to make provision for these activities in future planning for community facilities.
3. Women have a vital role in embedding a family into a community as they often have the most engagement with a local environment through shopping, school and local services. They are also responsible for children and the activities they take part in. It is therefore important that they are comfortable with any community facility and see it as a place that will not only help the development of their family and themselves through advice and information but also be a safe environment in which to socialise and relax with friends.

It is evident from the research that gender specific activities are important to the women of the estate and within a single sex environment. Any community facility would need to take this on board and make provision for activities to be held in this type of environment to ensure that all sections of the community can gain from a facility.

4. There were a number of people who showed an interest in a range of physical activities, from yoga to more traditional team sports. There are facilities available in Shandy Park but in a bad state of repair. It seems that they are still used and with repairs and the possibility of outreach sports coaching they could become an active sport venue.

We understand that residents are also able to use Mile End Leisure centre facilities at a reduced rate. This would appear to serve the other needs mentioned. It may be that the awareness and uptake of this facility needs to be checked to ensure everybody is aware of it.

The other reason that may be the cause of people asking for sports activities on the estate may be that:

- a) the Leisure Centre is not running single gender sessions at a time when the women are able to attend, or
- b) the transport links between the estate and the leisure centre are such that the centre is not easily accessible.

Further research would be needed to find the answers.