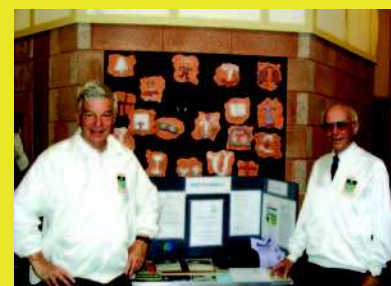


Report on the Neighbourhood Listen Events in Didcot



Contents

Introduction	3
Background	4
Objectives of the key agencies involved	5
Methodology	6 - 7
Outline of the events	8
Voluntary support	9
Financial implications	9
Attendance at the events	9
Survey results	10 - 11
Follow up	11
Outcomes	12 - 13
Challenges in joint working	14
Advantage in joint working	15
Lessons learned	16
Recommendations	16
Appendix 1	17 - 21
Details of organisations involved	17
The Community Learning and Support Partnership	17
Didcot Umbrella Project	18
Parents and Children Together	19
Didcot TRAIN Youth Project	20
Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action	21
Adult Learning	22
Appendix 2	23 - 24
Neighbourhood Listen survey	
Appendix 3	25 - 28
Neighbourhood Listen survey results	



Purpose of the report

This report has a number of aims:

- To give information back to people who were involved.
- To inform key agencies of good practice.
- To provide a model for consultation with the community.

Introduction

There was Magic Martin entertaining a large group of children by the side of the playground; a busy bouncy castle supervised by teenage boys, and a tent full of young people listening to DJing. People with clip boards in hand were engaged in conversation with individuals and small groups of people. There were information stalls, lap top computers and tutor, and a line of girls waiting their turn for hair braiding and removable tattoos. This was a Neighbourhood Listen event.

Through late spring and early summer 2004, there were 5 such events in different areas of Didcot. They were intended to be fun for the local community, but also to enable local organisations to research unmet needs, publicise services, and start an engagement process with local people.

A group of local organisations and residents had got together to put on these events; collectively they called themselves Neighbourhood Listen.



Background

The initial impetus behind Neighbourhood Listen came from the Clasp (Community Learning and Support Partnership) project.

The project was a partnership between Soha housing, Oxfordshire County Council Adult Learning (AL), and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), and funded by the Housing Corporation.

The core aim of the project was to provide support, and to make learning accessible, in order to enable residents to improve their own communities.

Clasp had a remit to have a focus on the Didcot area. This was because Soha housing had not previously been involved in community initiatives in Didcot, despite having a large housing stock in the town.

It was also noted that Didcot has a significant level of relative deprivation as highlighted by the Didcot Community Profile, carried out by the Public Health Resource Unit in 2003. Of the 54 wards in the South West Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, Didcot, Northbourne is the second most deprived. Didcot South is the highest ranked ward on the health domain, and Didcot Northbourne the highest ranked on the housing domain.

In meetings between Clasp and other local organisations it became clear that there was the common desire to disseminate information on existing services and to conduct research into the unmet needs of the localities within Didcot.

As a result an initial meeting was held at the Didcot Family Centre to explore the possibilities of a joint approach to research needs and disseminate information. The following organisations and groups were represented at the meeting:

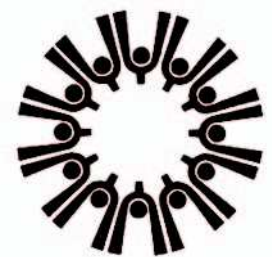
Clasp, Soha housing, Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action (OCVA), Parents and Children Together (PACT), the Didcot Umbrella Project (DUP), Adult Learning (AL), TRAIN Didcot Detached Youth Project, Family Centre Parents Club, and Fleet Meadow residents.



Objectives of the key agencies involved

Each organisation or group had its own aims.

- Clasp wanted to discover what the local issues were for people in different areas of Didcot, and to begin a process of supporting residents in addressing these issues.
- Parents and Children Together (PACT) wanted to ensure that the family centre services were known about and the centre was fully utilised. If the venue was not appropriate to peoples needs PACT wanted to know which services people would like delivered more locally.
- Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action (OCVA) were in the process of carrying out local consultation about the type of help and support OCVA may be able to offer voluntary organisations across Oxfordshire. Neighbourhood Listen could assist the consultation process.
- Adult Learning (AL) were interested in reaching out to people with low or no qualifications. In areas where there is a low take up of adult learning it was hoped that discovering what motivates people would inform future planning of provision of AL. AL was also part of the partnership behind the Clasp project and committed to providing training in conjunction with Soha housing.
- The TRAIN Detached Youth Project was concerned that young people often had misconceptions about services provided, and would welcome opportunities to challenge these and dispel them.
- The Tenant Participation Officer from Soha housing was interested in the formation of “resident estate watchers” to assist the estates team in keeping the estates well cared for.
- Residents wanted to bring the community together, and improve living environments.
- The Didcot Umbrella Project (DUP) were interested in activities that could improve family life, either through disseminating current information or by helping to address unmet needs.



Methodology

It was decided that the best way forward was to have an event(s). The purpose of the event(s) was to:

- Attract all sectors of the local communities.
- Provide a forum where Neighbourhood Listen could find out from residents what their concerns were.
- Provide a forum to publicise local services.
- Provide a fun event that could bring local communities together.
- Provide a starting point from which local resident action groups could work towards solutions for local problems.

The Didcot Community Profile had highlighted certain areas of Didcot as having particular problems; these included Mendip Heights, Great Western Drive, Ladygrove, Fleet Meadow, and Queensway.

As the problems highlighted by the Community Profile were of a very local nature, it was decided that there should be events in each one of the localities. It should be pointed out that the local knowledge of Neighbourhood Listen members was congruent with the findings of the Didcot Community Profile. The group felt that to reach out to the different areas of Didcot it was essential to hold events locally, rather than holding one central event in the town centre.

The group decided that the best way forward to meet its joint aims was to ask three basic questions to residents of the communities surveyed:

- What local services in Didcot did they use?
- What were the local issues / problems?
- What were the ideas people held for solutions to those problems?



We agreed that we should use two different methods to find out the information we wanted:-

1. A basic survey (see appendix 2). This took the form of an informal one to one interview, with the person carrying out the survey usually filling in the survey form with the interviewee.

2. Participatory learning techniques. The participant could put her / his ideas up on a wall (scrawl on a wall), or into the “wishing well” or on the “ideas tree”. These techniques were suited especially in getting the views of young people, and were varied to accommodate the venue.

We also decided to have a prize draw for everyone who gave their views and filled in a contact sheet. We wanted to have names and addresses so we could contact people for follow up events and to inform people of the results of the survey.

After the first event, questions concerning age and ethnic groups of participants were included so that we could monitor if we were reaching out to all sectors of the community.



Outline of the events

The central concept was to provide an enjoyable event that would attract people from across the community. In order to do this there had to be a spectrum of activities. Each event had a mixture of the following:

- Bouncy castle**
- Children's entertainer**
- A session on how to be a DJ**
- Exercise for older people**
- Indoor bowls**
- Computer training taster**
- Beauty and make up for teenagers and pre teens**
- Free food and refreshments**
- Information stalls on services**

The events took place at:

- Fleet Meadow Community Centre (25 April 2004)
- Ladygrove Community Centre (8th of May)
- Mendip Heights Recreation Ground (14th of May)
- Barnes Close Community Centre (22nd of May)
- All Saints Hall, Great Western Drive (12th of June)

The events were publicised by an article in the Didcot Herald, on Radio Oxford and by leafleting households in the local areas a few days before each event.

Staff from the Didcot Umbrella Project, Clasp and Soha housing, the PACT Family Centre, Adult Learning and the TRAIN detached youth worker facilitated the events.

This included carrying out the surveys and supervising the participatory learning exercise, providing information on local services and setting up and clearing away the event.

Other local agencies also participated such as the Baptist Church at Fleet Meadow and the Didcot Bowls Club at Ladygrove.



Voluntary support

As well as relying on the commitment of members of the agencies involved, the events could not have succeeded without the efforts of a number of volunteers from the community.

Volunteers managed the refreshments and food, carried out the survey with workers from the agencies involved and provided the transport for the bouncy castle, tables etc.

Also teenagers from the babysitting group (a group that arose from the Didcot Umbrella Project) supervised the use of the bouncy castle, making sure it was safe for all the children using it. They received a small payment for this.

The involvement of local volunteers also gave the events a greater legitimacy.

Neighbourhood Listen was a joint venture between local service providers and local residents, not just local organisations “doing it to people”. This helped the events be more inclusive as some people would find it easier to talk to a fellow resident or tenant, rather than to a housing, family centre or community learning professional.



Financial implications

The average cost of each event was £500. This did not include any costing for worker time. The costs were met by the Clasp Project, Didcot Umbrella Project and OCVA.

Attendance

Between 400 and 500 people in total came to the 5 events.

Fleet Meadow, Mendip Heights and Ladygrove were all well attended by adults, teenagers and children. At Great Western Drive there were a large number of children but few adults, and Barnes Close was poorly attended with only around 20 people coming.

At each event we tried to elicit the views of as many people as possible, but as each interview took 5 to 10 minutes we were not able to gain the views of everyone. Some people preferred to give their views as couples or small groups. There were also a number of very young children who were too young to participate.

In all we were able to survey the views and gain contact details of 152 people.



Survey Results

The services that were used by the largest percentage of participants were:

● Didcot Wave	41%
● The Parks,	23%
● The Library	20%



The results showed that there were a number of common issues that were identified in each area.

The following issues were identified by the highest percentage of survey participants:

● Not enough for children and teenagers to do	(31.5%)
● Anti social behaviour	(31%)
● Litter and large dumped items	(31%)
● Drugs	(24%)
● Road traffic concerns	(24%)



The most sighted solutions were:

● More for young people to do	21%
● More shops	10.5%
● More community events	10%
● Youth Club	9%



There were also specific local issues, such as lack of community facilities at Mendip Heights. See Appendix 3 for the full results.

The breakdown per age bracket of people who gave their views and contact details was:

● Up to 10 years old	10%
● 11 to 16 years old	28%
● 17 to 30 years old	23%
● 31 to 50 years old	31%
● 51 to 70 years old	5%
● 70+	3%

The breakdown by ethnic group was: -

● White British	89%
● Other	4%
● Irish	2.5%
● Black Caribbean	2.5%
● White and Black Caribbean	1.5%

It should be noted that the events were very successful in involving young people and people from black and minority ethnic groups. Housing Associations have generally found it difficult to engage residents who are under 50 years of age in tenant involvement. Further the percentage of people in South Oxfordshire who are not white British is only 4.1%

Follow up

There was a series of follow up meetings in each of the local areas, except for Barnes Close as the attendance at that one event was poor.

For the follow up events everyone who had given contact details at Fleet Meadow, Ladygrove, Mendip Heights / Oval, Great Western Drive, was invited to an open meeting in their area. The local areas were also leafleted. The aims of the meetings were to disseminate the results of the survey and to start a dialogue with local residents about how the issues they had raised could be addressed. Each meeting was facilitated by the Clasp Community Outreach Worker and by another member of Neighbourhood Listen.



Outcomes

There have been a number of significant outcomes from the Neighbourhood Listen events, some that were foreseen and others that were not:

- Knowledge gained from the survey of local needs and wants has helped to inform the nature of service provision.
- There are now two active resident action groups that are addressing local issues at Fleet Meadow and Great Western Drive that resulted from the follow up meetings to the Neighbourhood Listen events. It is hoped also that there will be a similar group at the Oval/Mendip Heights.
- The links between organisations that have been fostered by Neighbourhood Listen have been extremely valuable to the new resident groups. The detached youth worker for example, has established links with the Fleet Meadow and Great Western Drive Groups. This has led to plans to develop a youth project to address anti-social behaviour. Information on services such as the Didcot Umbrella Project and the Youth Club are also disseminated at the meetings.
- There was an issue with the bouncy castle at one of the events with hard to manage children. A volunteer, who also provided the transport for the events, had been previously trained in assertiveness. As a result of the problems that arose, he facilitated a session on assertiveness for the babysitting boys. The experience of supervising the bouncy castle and the assertiveness training gave them the confidence to do peer teaching on a 10 week baby sitting course.
- A young mum from Fleet Meadow, who attended the Fleet Meadow event and is part of a resident action group, is working towards setting up her own mothers support group which will include learning opportunities. The Clasp project, PACT Family Centre and Didcot Umbrella project are working together to support this initiative.
- The Family Centre was able to successfully publicise its activities at the Fleet Meadow event, and enable more people from the area to use its services.



- The Mendip Heights event attracted people from the Oval. The event was used by them to get names for a petition concerning plans for the future use of the barracks land.
- Awareness of other facilities was raised. For example, if someone is on benefits they have free access to Didcot Wave facilities.
- Local councillors attended the events, and a working relationship has been developed between councillors and residents.
- The Neighbourhood Listen events established a relationship with the Crime Reduction Officer who has attended subsequent resident meetings.
- Computer training was made accessible to people who attended the events.
- The detached youth worker has been able to build upon the relationships with young people that he met at the events.
- The volunteer, who provided transport for the events, went on to provide transport for the Didcot Umbrella Group, transporting young people on holiday, and for Soha housing at the Kassam Stadium Tenant Participation event.
- Computer training was made accessible to people whose mobility was impaired.
- Ongoing working relationships were established between Fleet Meadow and District Residents Group and the Baptist Church.



Challenges in joint working

- Some organisations were able to put more time into the events than others. However, this was not a serious problem, as each organisation was clear about the commitment it was able to make.
- Each agency had its own agenda.
- Each organisation has its own culture and methods of working with its own client group. This way of working might not be so applicable to another client group.
- We were successful in sustaining the involvement of volunteers who were residents at the events. However, we were not successful in maintaining resident involvement at planning meetings.
- The questionnaire had to cover the agendas of all the agencies involved.
- There had to be clear communication between organisations to prevent misunderstandings.
- The Family Centre and Didcot Umbrella Project had no base for most of the period of the events.
- As time progressed the burden of responsibility for planning events and evaluation fell to fewer organisations.



Advantages of joint working

- As each organisation had its own networks and areas of expertise, Neighbourhood Listen was able to reach out to a larger segment of the community.
- Organisations that had already established links with local communities were able to make the events more accessible and help recruit more volunteers.
- Residents who had an established link with one organisation could be introduced to other services that could be relevant to them within Neighbourhood Listen.
- Better communications and ongoing working relationships were established between the organisations involved.
- Sharing of expertise. The organisations were able to learn different approaches from each other.
- Sharing of equipment, such as the bouncy castle from the Family Centre.
- The questionnaires were more comprehensive than they would have been if only one agency had been involved.
- There were spin off benefits for each agency. For example, both the Clasp Outreach Worker and the Family Centre Manager, by leafleting a large number of households, were able to deepen their local knowledge.
- The cost of the events could be shared.
- A larger range of activities could be offered at the events.
- It provided an opportunity to build relationships and trust with local people and make services more accessible.



Lessons learned

- Joint working between organisations and residents worked and was invaluable.
- Choice of venue was crucial.
- It was important when carrying out research to give something back to communities; “fun and follow up”.
- It was possible to reach out to “hard to reach groups. “
- It was valuable bringing in diversity from outside the area.
- It would be necessary in future to be more proactive to ensure the sustained involvements of residents at the planning meetings.
- It would have been beneficial to have had involvement from the Youth Service.

Recommendations

1. Local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) should support local residents and community organisations to put on events similar to Neighbourhood Listen. These events could:

- Encourage a sense of community.
- Assist the development of resident action groups.
- Identify current local issues.
- Identify local unmet needs.
- Improve the awareness of local services.
- Be a tool to enable RSLs to consult with and involve tenants and residents, especially those who are considered to be in hard to reach groups.
- Lay the foundations for joint working between community organisations.

2. All RSLs that provide housing in Didcot should recognise the importance of resident action groups. They should make a commitment to:

- a) Promote the inception of groups where there are none, especially in areas where there are serious local issues
- b) Support the development of existing fledgling groups.



APPENDIX I

Details of organisation involved

The community learning and support partnership

Clasp is a Partnership between Soha housing, residents, Oxfordshire County Council Community Education Department, and South Oxfordshire District Council.

Clasp aims to:

- Support residents in having the opportunity to be more actively involved in improving their own communities.

Clasp aims to do this by:

- Supporting residents in identifying local issues, and working to make local improvements.
- Exploring with residents and local community groups what their learning needs might be to enable them to improve the community where they live.
- Linking in with education providers so that these learning needs can be met.
- Improving the accessibility of computer training for residents.

Contact: The Clasp Community Outreach Worker or Tenant Involvement Officer on **01235 515900**.



Didcot Umbrella Project.

DUP is a consortium of agencies and individuals who have shared vision of 'Improving Family Life'.

In 1998 a number of professionals came together to form an organisation that would research and react to the unmet needs of families. Particularly in the field of education. Original grant money from the Adult & Community Learning Fund enabled the employment of an outreach worker who provided many educative interventions such as parenting courses, basic skills etc.

More recently a grant from the Big Lottery has enabled a more informal approach to enhancing family life. A Community Development Worker was appointed and this enabled DUP to actively work with young mums (high-lighted in a residential holiday), provide more creative education such as Interior design and promote work with teenagers through our successful babysitting training and support network.

Much of our provision has been easily accessible to families because of the work of our Creche Development Worker and a team of sessional creche workers. **Contact : 01235 811204**

The strength of the DUP comes from the partnerships we have forged over the years, linking together agencies and individuals who together can effect great change for communities and families.



Parents and Children Together.



PACT is the trading name of the Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work. Originally an adoption agency, PACT has spread its wings to encompass work in the Housing and Community field.

Most recently PACT has secured the contract to manage the Family Centres in Didcot, Abingdon and Berinsfield along with satellite programmes in Sutton Courtenay and Wantage.

The Family Centres provide a safe and stimulating environment for parents to learn and develop together and activities provided range from messy play to Saturdays, cooking sessions to Working Mums Network and Health Education courses to holiday trips out and about with much more besides.

In Didcot we have a well used multi sensory book room and delightful home corner, where children are encouraged to realise their full potential. Our latest addition will be a one to one health room that all health professionals will be able to access as an informal and less daunting meeting space. Our outdoor play space is much appreciated by those who don't have secure garden areas at home.

During opening hours there are always staff on hand to offer advice and guidance, sign post to appropriate services or just to be a listening ear to an insurmountable problem.

PACT also have a team of Family Support Workers who are able to offer individual support in family homes especially focussing on issues of domestic violence and debt. This work is funded by the Government 'Supporting People' initiative. **Contact PACT Didcot Family Centre : 01235 511444**

Didcot TRAIN Youth Project

Didcot TRAIN Youth Project is a charity that was set up by the churches of Didcot. TRAIN stands for To Reach out And Interact with the youNg people of Didcot and in this name it states it's primary aim of the charity. The majority of its work is done in the form of detached youth work carried out by a full-time youth worker and a team of volunteers who meet the young people wherever they are, be it on the streets, in the parks and anywhere they hang out. By meeting them where they are at, TRAIN seeks to listen, support and help the young people it comes into contact with, it also encourages young people to be constructive with their spare time and to empower them in their situations.

TRAIN currently runs a weekly football project, has set up a young people's skate group called DISC and has numerous alternative Friday night trips.

To contact TRAIN telephone: **01235 519315** or email train.youthworker@ctdd.org.uk



Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action

Mission statement September 2004

Our mission: Enabling a diverse voluntary and community sector to flourish in Oxfordshire
We do this by providing advice, information and training, acting as advocates and representatives, and building partnerships.

Our values: as an organisation and as individuals we value:

- **equality**
We will work within an equal opportunities policy which is regularly reviewed. We will respect the rights, views and needs of others.
- **professionalism**
We will be effective and reliable in our service delivery, partnership working and relationships with funders.
- **empowerment**
We will enable others to take responsibility for identifying and achieving their own objectives. We will support the take up of our services by individuals and groups from a diverse range of backgrounds, including the most disadvantaged.
- **flexibility**
We will respond to a constantly changing environment with energy and creativity, in order to influence the future of our sector.
- **collaboration**
We will build and maintain a variety of strong relationships and be open and honest in sharing information and skills.



Adult Learning

Adult Learning is part of the Learning & Leisure Directorate of Oxfordshire County Council. Didcot Adult Learning provide a wide range of learning opportunities including a programme of daytime and evening classes covering a wide range of subjects from entry level (for those new to a subject) to level 3 (equivalent to 'A' levels). As well as these classes, which are advertised in our annual brochure, we run various projects and cooperate with a variety of local organisations to bring learning to the reach of people in the community who, for one reason or another, experience difficulty accessing learning.

These projects include Family Learning, delivered in Schools, Nurseries, Playgroups, Family Centres etc. Older & Bolder, groups for older learners including exercise, information and learning activities. Prescription for Learning, a learning advisor in surgeries who can give patients information and advice about learning.

Neighbourhood Listen was one of the projects that helps Adult Learning find out what local people are really interested in. We will use this information when planning learning in Didcot as well as working with local people to train them to achieve their aims.

Contact Didcot Adult Learning on: 01235 812002

Thanks

We would like to thank all the volunteers who made such a difference. Thanks Phil, Freda, Don and Debbie.

Thanks to the boys, who did such a great job supervising the bouncy castle. Also thanks to the Didcot Bowls Club, Fleet Meadow Baptist Church, Ensor Entertainments, Debbie and Fiona for the Health and Beauty workshops, Magic Martin, DJ Ben Clements and Cat for the computer taster sessions.



APPENDIX 2

Neighbourhood Listen survey

We would really appreciate your time in answering the questions below which will only take you a few minutes to complete.

The issues and solutions you raise will be taken up by the organisations of Neighborhood Listen to help improve life in the area

1) What services are you aware of or do you use in Didcot?

Eg. advice & support organisations, recreation & leisure, businesses, shops

2) What are the problems or issues for you in the area and in Didcot?

3) What are your 3 most important issues or problems?

4) What do you think are the possible solutions?

It would be helpful if you could tell us what age range you are in:

- Up to age 10 11 to age 16 17 to age 30
31 to age 50 51 to age 70 70 +

It would also be helpful if you could tell us your ethnic background:

- White British Irish other
Mixed White & Black Caribbean
 White & Black African
 White & Asian other
Asian or Asian British Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi
 other
Black or Black British Caribbean African other
Chinese or other ethnic Group Chinese other
I do not wish to give this information

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey
We will provide feedback to all residents in the area as soon as possible
We will keep your name and address confidential

Please complete your details below and put in the prize draw box

First Name:.....Surname:.....
Address:.....Postcode:.....
Phone:.....Email:.....

If I win I would like one of the following vouchers – please put a circle round one

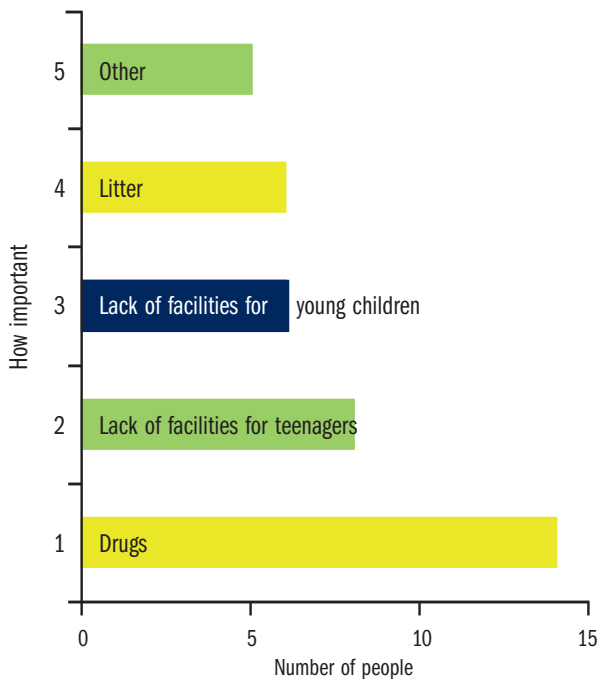
Boots

Tesco

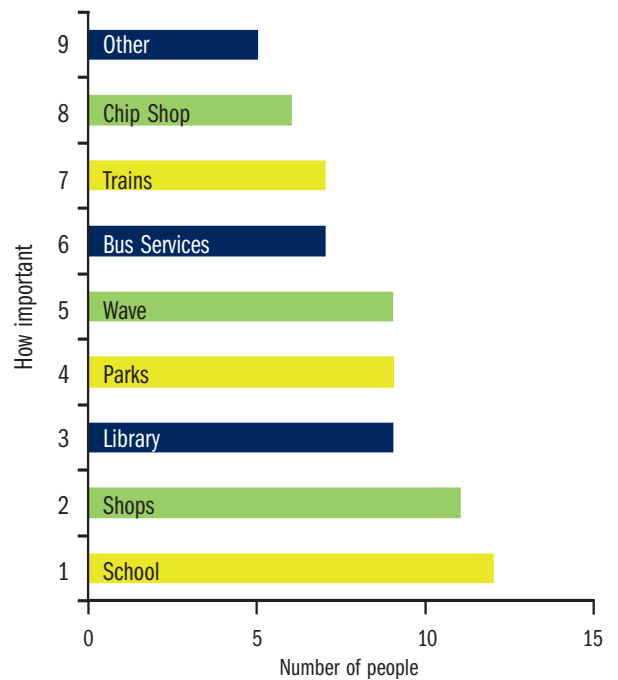
WHSmith

APPENDIX 3 Survey results

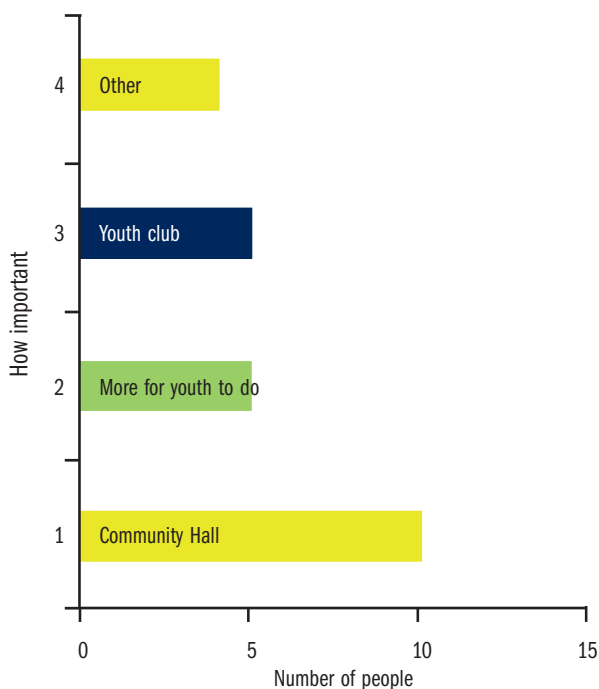
Mendip Heights and the Oval Problems



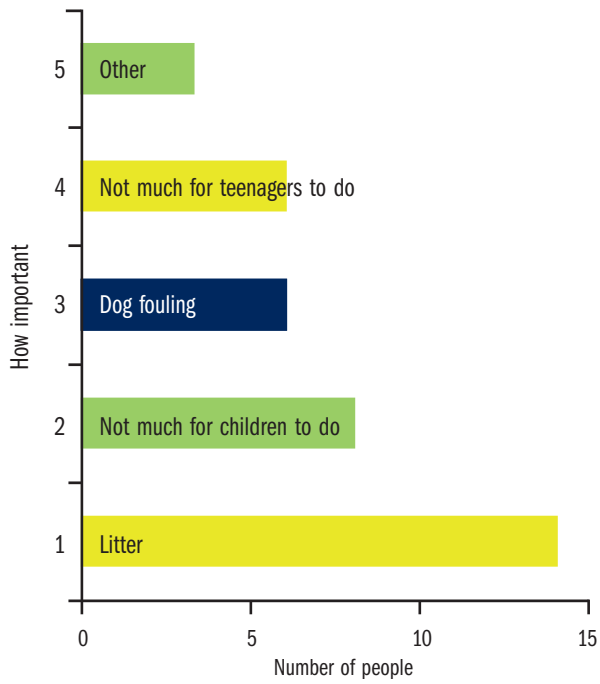
Mendip Heights and the Oval Services



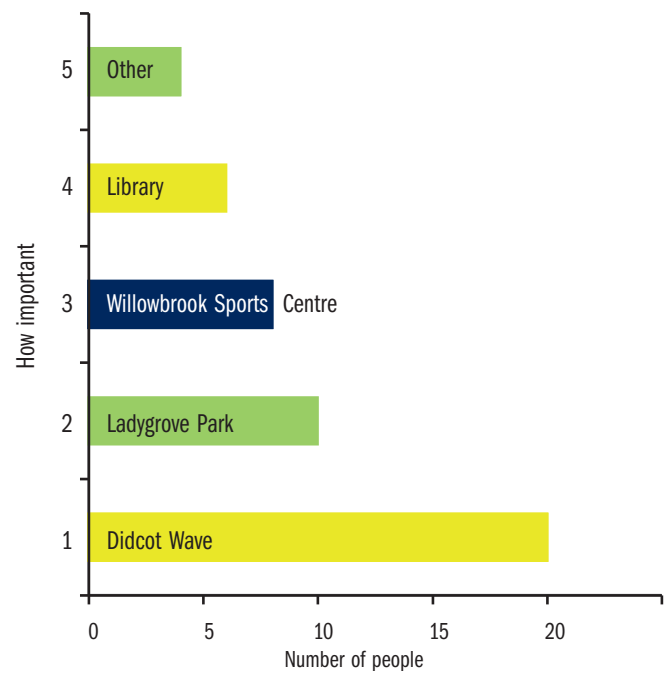
Mendip Heights and the Oval Solutions



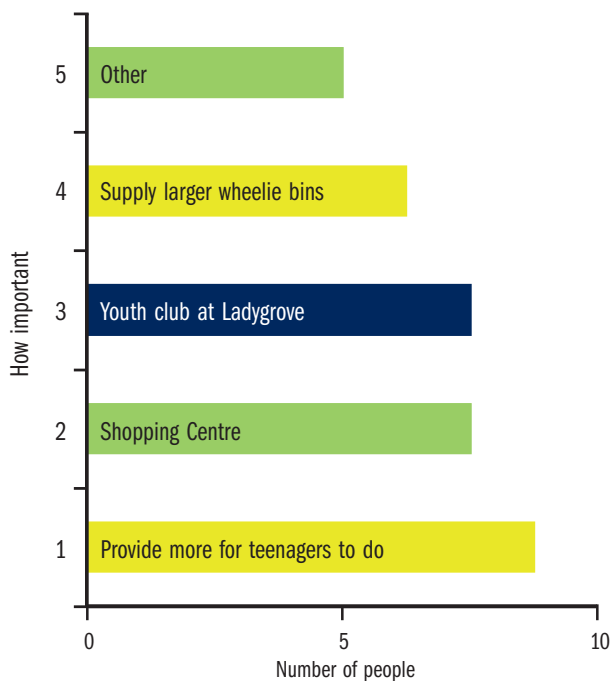
Ladygrove Problems



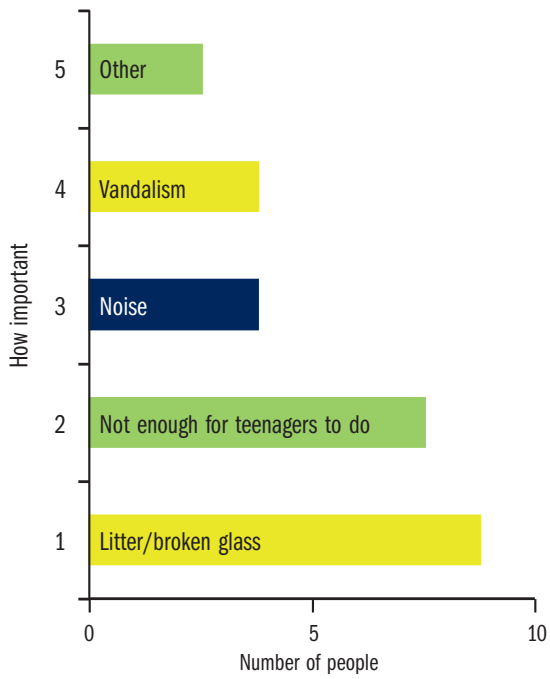
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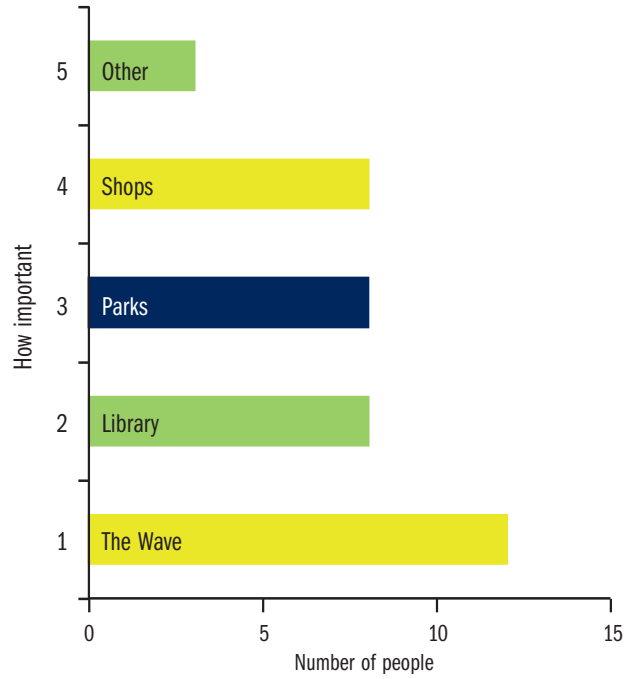
Ladygrove Solutions



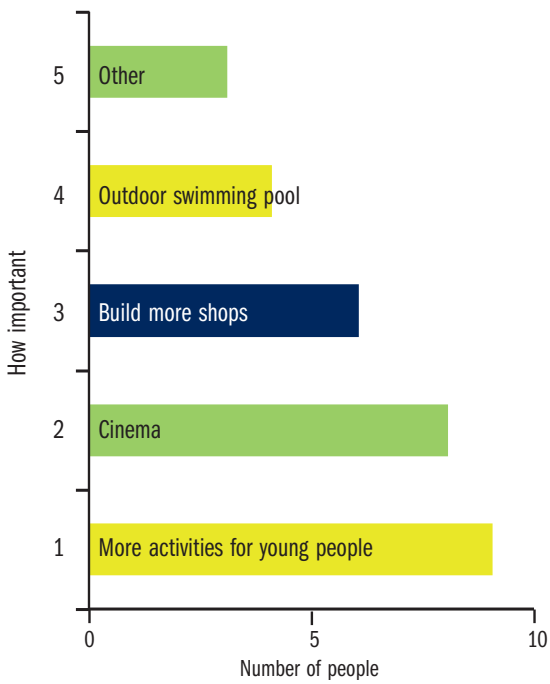
Great Western Drive Problems



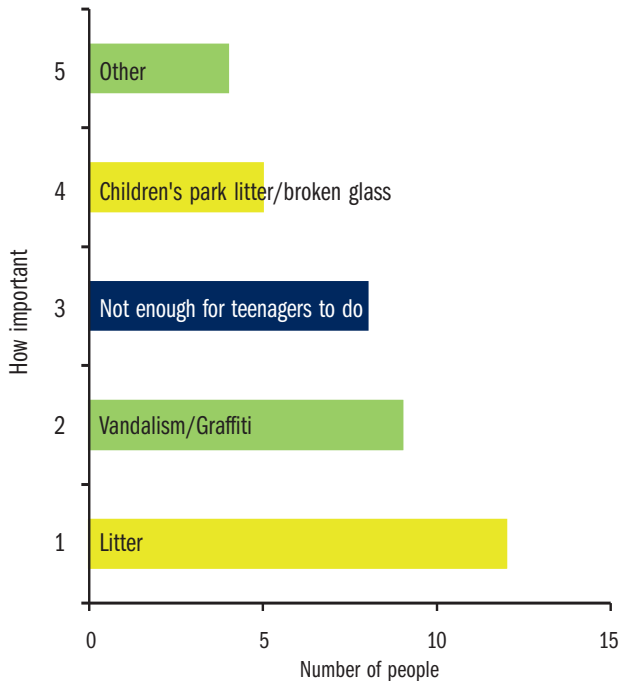
Great Western Drive Services



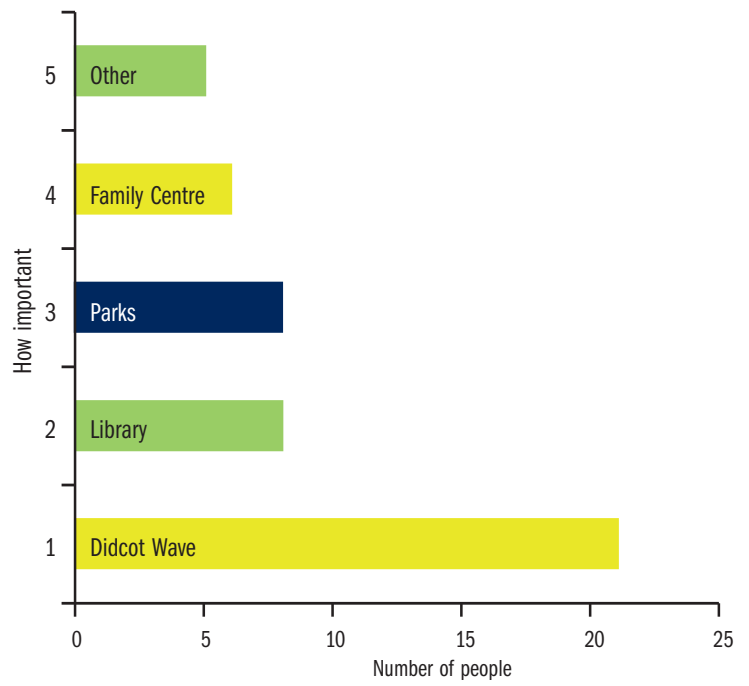
Great Western Drive Solutions



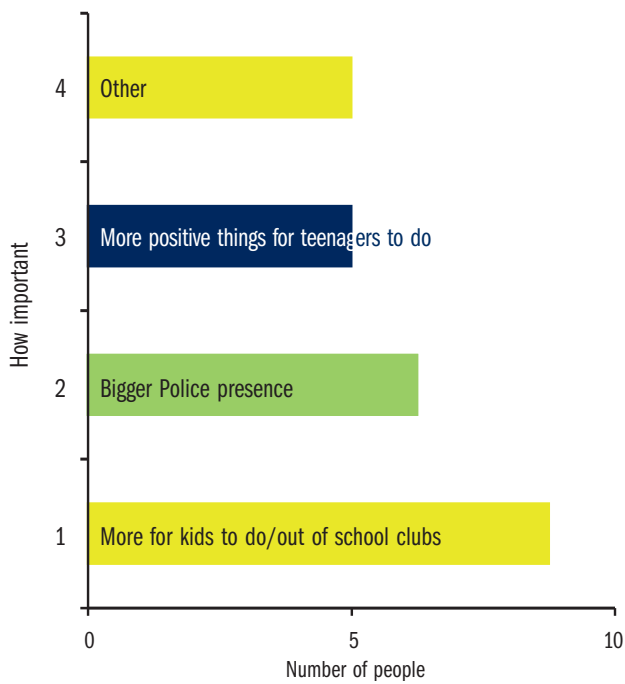
Fleet Meadow Problems



Fleet Meadow Services



Fleet Meadow Solutions



Report on the Neighbourhood Listen Events in Didcot in 2004

