

Listening to You

Dewsbury and Mirfield

Venue: Salfia Association

Date: 8 May 2008

Attendance: 41

Facilitators: Ken Gillespie



Front line workers from Kirklees Council services and partner organisations including Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, Kirklees Active Leisure, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, West Yorkshire Police and Kirklees Primary Care Trust were invited to this series of “Listening to You” events.

Key points from discussions

1. Improve community cohesion

It was suggested there is a need for more events to bring the whole community together and possibly increase community engagement where local people can air their views. Also highlighted the need to improve joined up working between services and agencies to ensure consistent messages.

It was also suggested that new arriving communities need a clear understanding of the Law of England.

2. Target crime hotspots and fear of crime

Police having more presence has appeared to reduce ‘fear of crime’ and it was felt that the community and the police work well together. However it was felt that more police presence is still needed. It was suggested that the police could hold surgeries in libraries/LICS every couple of months and work is needed to educate residents on crime prevention.

Domestic violence was also highlighted as a major issue.

3. Raise educational standards

Need to work with parents and families to break the cycle. It was felt there is a need for more apprenticeship schemes and vocational training. Suggested training young people to redevelop old buildings for council properties, would be a good start.

Felt it would be good to have more services similar to the 'revolving door' pilot which supports children back into education following exclusion. Also create better links with teaching staff to raise their awareness of what other services can do to support them. Suggested a need for more mentors to operate in schools.

4. Improve children and young people facilities and activities

A lack of facilities for young people such as sport/cinema as well as a lack of open spaces was highlighted. It was felt that existing activities are costly and lack variety but also need to be promoted more to raise awareness. Suggested a need for something for young people to do until 10pm.

5. Tackle the health issues

It was felt there is a need to improve links with groups of the community to encourage them to take up services. For example, people from BME communities encouraged to access health services. The need to encourage people to be more active was also noted.

Infant mortality, teenage pregnancies, diet, drugs and alcohol were also highlighted as major problems.

6. Meet housing needs

A lack of affordable, suitable housing was highlighted as a major problem. Noted that new housing being built has an impact on schools, roads and existing communities.

Lack of council houses was seen as a problem. It was suggested to use empty buildings rather than letting owners board them up. It was also suggested the council should buy old mills and develop them.

7. Create attractive settlements

A general improvement of garden areas and parking facilities was noted but there is still a need to improve the greenway and maintain existing open spaces and on a regular basis. It was also suggested that the community service team to clean up 'grot spots'.

Noted that shops are closing with no replacements – they would rather locate in the White Rose Centre. Need to offer affordable rents in the town centre shops to encourage businesses to locate in Dewsbury. It was also suggested that businesses could sponsor the development of local shrubbery areas such as roundabouts.

It was highlighted that more monitoring of local landlords was also needed to make sure they look after their properties.

It was also felt that Huddersfield gets all the attention and this causes problems.

8. Enhance the transport infrastructure

It was felt that poor public transport and the cost of it makes having a car almost a 'must'. Local railway stations are not 'manned' and due to their locations are not always an attractive option. Suggested a free town bus similar to the Huddersfield "free bus scheme" could reduce the number of cars on the road. This would be even better if it was also available for school children.

People mentioned that the roads are poor quality. This is coupled with the fact there is a lack of parking which leads to neighbours competing for the space.

It was suggested that Kirklees Council should provide a travel pass as part of its employment package to encourage travel to work by public transport.