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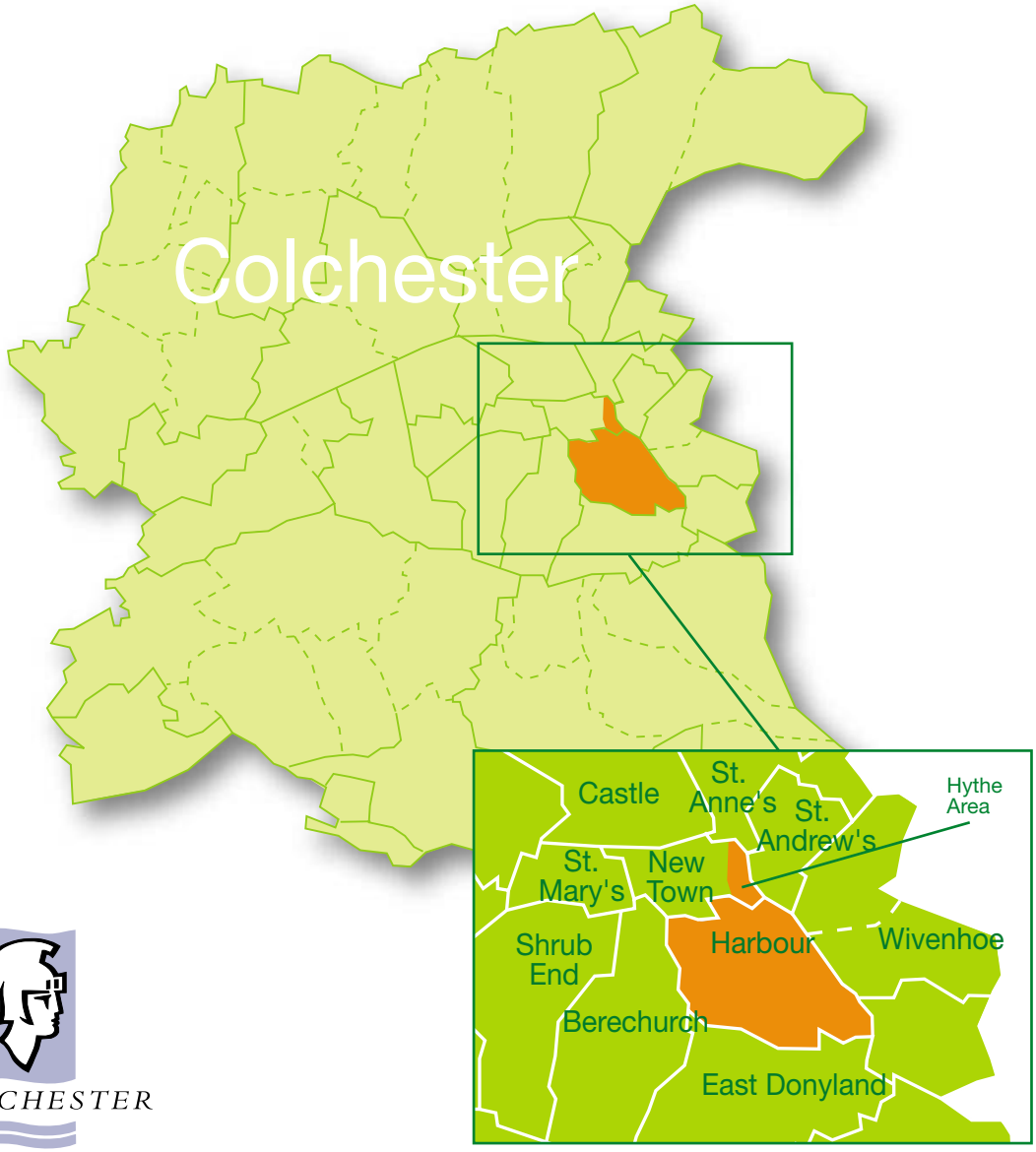
Harbour Ward Community Strengths Assessment



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Colchester Borough Council

HARBOUR WARD COMMUNITY STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT

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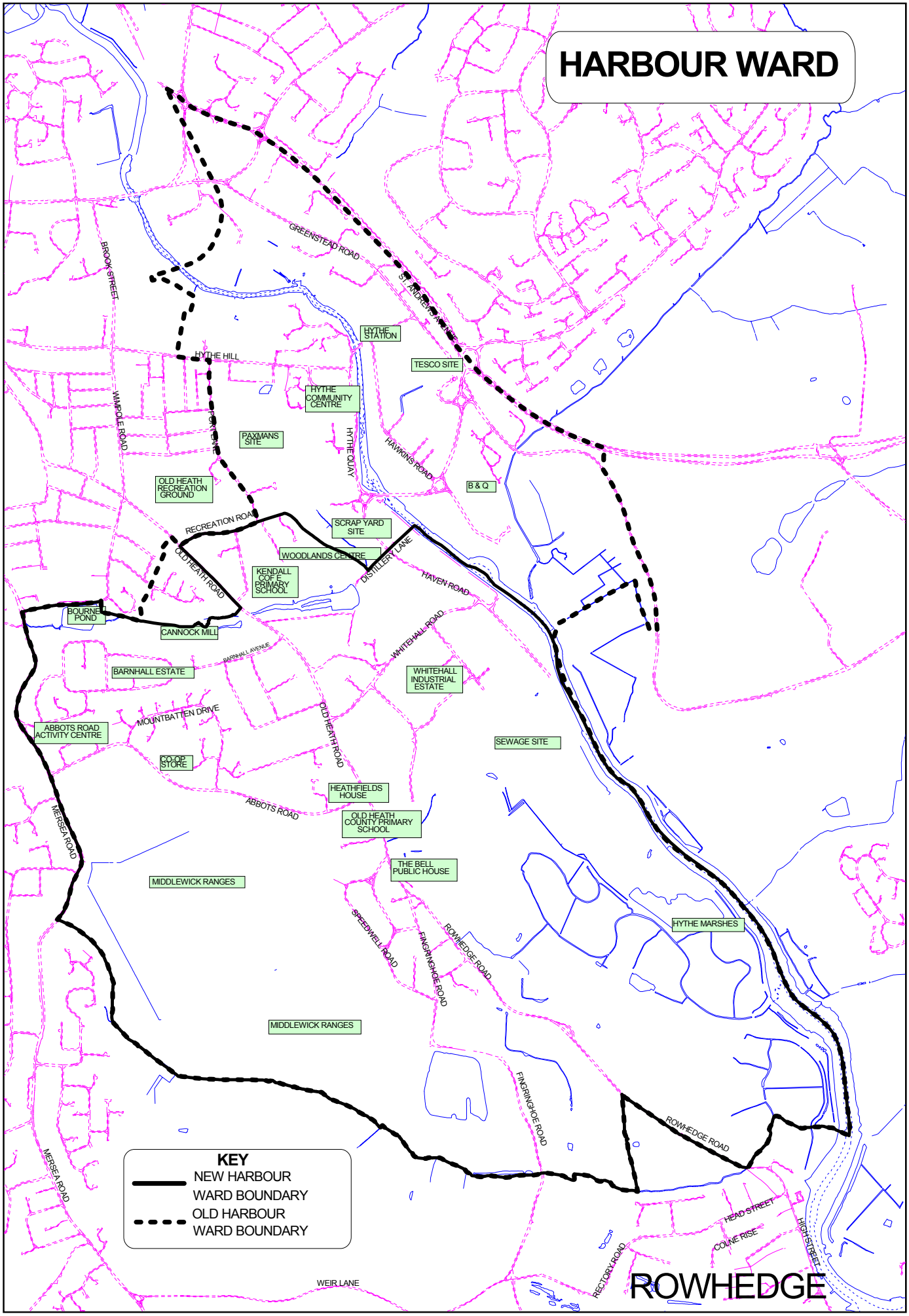

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1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Background to the research

1.1.1 This is the first of four community assessments that the Social and Economic Regeneration Group at Colchester Borough Council are undertaking in local authority wards that have been identified as 'deprived' in the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 (ID 2000). The four wards where assessments will take place are: Harbour, Berechurch, St Andrew's and St Anne's. It is estimated that all four community assessments will be completed by April/May 2004.

1.1.2 The research looks at needs in Harbour area. These needs have been established from consultation with residents about their neighbourhood and community. This is accompanied by analysis from interviews with community and voluntary groups about the strengths and needs of their organisations and interviews about the support that these groups receive.

1.1.3 Research has shown that a vibrant community and voluntary sector and increased community involvement can have a significant positive impact on social exclusion in areas of deprivation. Future community development work will be planned largely around the findings of this research.

1.2 Structure of the report

This report (Harbour ward) is divided into five main chapters:

Part 1: Introduction and methodology
Part 2: Executive summary of findings and recommendations
Part 3: Results of household survey
Part 4: Results of community and voluntary groups survey
Part 5: Results of support organisations survey

1.3 Geography and boundaries used

1.3.1 This report looks specifically at community need in Harbour ward Details of the ward boundary can be viewed on the map on page 3.

1.3.2 As mentioned above, Harbour ward was initially selected along with four other wards as the target area for this research on the basis of its score on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (ID 2000). This highlighted that Harbour ward is the third most deprived ward in the borough. Harbour ward was selected as the starting point for this series of

community assessments because it was felt that out of the four areas, it was in Harbour that we had most to learn.

1.3.2 Targeting Harbour ward was complicated slightly by the fact that the boundaries for this ward changed significantly in May 2002. Details of these changes can be viewed on the map on page 3. Until these changes came into effect, the Hythe regeneration area was officially part of Harbour ward. Since the ID 2000 figures are based on the former ward boundaries, it was felt that community and voluntary groups in the Hythe area should also be interviewed.

1.3.3 Since a major household survey was carried out in the Hythe regeneration area in 2002 for the ECCO Evaluation Report, the household survey part of this research was not conducted in this area.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 This research involved three separate parts:

a) A household survey
b) Interviews with community and voluntary groups
c) Interviews with support organisations

The details of each of these methods are outlined below.

1.4.2 *a) Household survey*

A household survey was carried out in April/May 2003. It involved face to face interviews with people in a total of 213 households in Harbour ward, amounted to a sample just below 10% of all those resident in the area. A quota sample was used to select respondents on the basis of age, gender and housing tenure. An additional mix was also included based upon employment status. The information used to formulate the sample figures came from the 1998 population estimates as the Census 2001 data was not yet available.

1.4.3 *b) Interviews with community and voluntary groups*

Interviews were conducted with 28 community and voluntary groups in the Harbour ward and the Hythe area in April/May 2003. In addition some groups in the areas surrounding Harbour ward were interviewed.

1.4.4 A comprehensive list of the groups and organisation in these areas was not available prior to conducting the research. An initial list was created from existing knowledge of Council's community development officers, to identify the groups to be interviewed. A question asking the groups if they were aware of other groups operating in the area, was also included in the questionnaire, which meant that additional groups were identified as the interviewing process developed.

1.4.5 The results from Harbour ward, the Hythe and the surrounding areas have been highlighted separately throughout this analysis where possible. This enabled us to identify any trends and patterns that might be specific to the individual areas.

1.4.6 *c) Interviews with support organisations*

Fifteen organisations that provide some kind of support to voluntary and community organisations were interviewed during April/May 2003. This support might take the form of practical help, training, advice, funding, facilities, resources, equipment, information or staff time. Support organisations may provide a great deal of support or very little according to the type of organisation and resources they have available.

1.4.7 Some of the support organisations that we interviewed operate in Harbour ward and some in the Hythe regeneration area. Some were also interviewed on the basis of the potential support that they could offer community and voluntary groups in these areas.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 Focus of community investment

2.1.1 In Harbour there are less than half (six) the number of community and voluntary groups than there are in the Hythe (13). This in part reflects the fact that there has been more community investment in the Hythe regeneration area than in Harbour ward.

2.1.2 One example of this concentration of resources is that whilst three support organisations fund groups in the Hythe regeneration area, only one is funding a group in Harbour.

2.1.3 This gulf between the amount of funding that has gone into these two areas is also highlighted by interviews with the community and voluntary groups themselves. More than one half of the groups in Harbour (four) said that funding is a significant problem, in contrast to only two of the 13 groups in the Hythe who said that it is a significant problem.

2.1.4 Another example is the number of paid employees support organisations employ to work specifically within these areas. According to the organisations interviewed, there are three and a half full time paid employees that carry out some work with community and voluntary groups in the Hythe regeneration area, including a jointly funded community development worker. In contrast, there is just the equivalent of one full-time employee from these support organisations working in Harbour, but this person is also shared across a number of other areas (including the Hythe regeneration area).

2.2 Community meeting facilities

2.2.1 Groups in Harbour were generally much less satisfied with their arrangements for using premises than groups in the Hythe regeneration area or groups in the surrounding areas. This dissatisfaction is highlighted by the fact that of the three groups overall who said that they have no alternative but to meet in a member's home or public place, all are based in Harbour ward.

2.2.2 This issue of community meeting facilities has been strongly vocalised by groups in Harbour ward and by community workers looking to extend outreach into this area. Without prompting, 21% of residents also highlighted the need for a community meeting place through the household survey.

2.2.3 A very small proportion of residents that took part in the household survey (7%) said that they attend social clubs in area. A convincing

explanation for this is that there are very few community and voluntary groups running social clubs in Harbour. This in turn may very likely be linked to the fact that there is not a designated local community space in which social groups can meet.

2.3 Funding

2.3.1 Funding seems to be a general concern for groups in all areas, with 21 of the 28 groups that were interviewed indicating that it is a problem on some level.

2.3.2 It is interesting to note that where funding advice has been sought, groups appear to be more confident in their fundraising skills.

2.4 Transport

2.4.1 Of the eight resources that groups were asked about, access to transport seems to be the most problematic. A sum of nine groups rated transport as a problem.

2.4.2 One support organisation said that they help community and voluntary groups with the issue of transport, with a charge. Additionally, one group in Harbour and two groups in the surrounding area said that they could offer transport to groups.

2.4.3 This could be an indication that co-ordinating transport between groups in the area may help alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by these groups who highlighted transport problems as an issue.

2.5 Services for young people

2.5.1 Services and facilities for young people in Harbour ward have been identified as an area of need through the household survey. When asked about ideas for additional community groups, 23% of those that responded said that the community would benefit from more activities for teenagers and 20% suggested facilities for younger children such as a play group or play area.

2.5.2 General leisure and recreation facilities were also seen to be areas that could be further developed in Harbour. A total of 40% of respondents to the household survey said that leisure and recreation facilities are poor or very poor.

2.5.3 Research conducted at the beginning of 2003 by the Community Street Wardens supports the view that more facilities and activities need to be targeted at young people in Harbour ward. In a survey conducted with residents on Barnhall estate, 77% of people said that there are not

enough activities in the area to keep young people occupied. A meeting with teenagers established that the facilities they would like are a football field and a youth club.

2.6 Community and voluntary groups: skills and training

2.6.1 Interviews with the support organisations revealed that a wide range of training is available to community and voluntary groups. The support organisations interviewed said that they could provide a total of almost 50 training courses on 16 subject areas.

2.6.2 Resources are also available for tailor-made training courses and there is some capacity for groups to run their own training. However, very little tailor made training is given to groups by support organisations.

2.6.3 On the whole, groups expressed high levels of confidence that the skills of their active members meet the needs of their organisation. Nearly two thirds of groups had received training in the last year. Most groups said that they had also developed their skills through experience or action.

2.6.4 Groups were especially confident about their skills in team working, working in partnership and planning activities.

2.6.5 More than one half of all groups said they would like help identifying their training needs. This is positive because there may be skills that groups have not thought to develop, which would be extremely beneficial to their work and the strength of the organisation.

2.6.6 There is some evidence that the awareness of the value of training in the development of the organisation is lacking in some groups. For example, many groups felt that managing staff is not relevant to the work of their active members. However, staff and volunteer management is extremely important for building the capacity of an organisation. Many groups said that they experience problems recruiting and retaining volunteers. It is possible that the awareness of management skills in the development of the group is under-appreciated by some of the groups.

2.6.7 Training is available on the three areas in which a number of groups said that they have difficulties: computer skills, the media and how the Council works. The support organisations may wish to consider focussing on these areas when helping groups to identify their training needs.

2.6.8 The support organisations indicated that they can provide advice on funding, planning and developing the organisation and managing projects.

2.6.9 Advice is not available on team building, meeting and committee skills and using the media.

2.7 Building equality

2.7.1 Nearly one third of community and voluntary groups do not have an equal opportunities policy or statement of equality within their constitution.

2.7.2 Groups tend to have an informal approach to implementing equal opportunities, although on the whole they seem genuinely committed to fairness.

2.7.3 One third of all groups that we spoke to use buildings that are not accessible to wheelchair users. This includes half of the groups in Harbour, roughly one third of the groups in the Hythe regeneration area and the majority of groups in the surrounding area. All but one of the groups in Harbour use buildings that do not have wheelchair accessible toilets.

2.7.4 There is very minimal support available to groups in the arena of equal opportunities from the support organisations interviewed. Also lacking is the availability of training, translators/interpreters and funding for equal opportunities initiatives.

2.7.5 Many of the support organisations said that they were happy to offer informal advice and information when approached by individual groups. However, there was very little focus on the development of equal opportunities within the community and voluntary groups and very little support offered by support organisations to assist this development.

2.8 Building community involvement

2.8.1 The most common means for communicating with the community is through newsletters and regular feedback meetings. One third of groups also hold an annual election of representatives.

2.8.2 The most common methods of finding out about community needs are through survey research and outreach work.

2.9 Community networks

2.9.1 More than one half of the community and voluntary groups that we interviewed are members of formal networks. These groups represent a good cross section of those in the Hythe regeneration area, Harbour and the surrounding area.

2.9.2 Interestingly, support agencies felt that a strong aspect of the work that they carry out with community and voluntary groups is helping them to work jointly with statutory agencies and other groups.

2.9.3 Just one third of community and voluntary groups (nine) have been involved in joint working with the Council and a little over one third of groups have been involved in joint working with any other statutory agencies. In both these cases, these figures represent mostly groups from the Hythe area.

2.9.4 Of those support organisations that have a role in networks with community and voluntary groups, only one related their involvement specifically to Harbour ward and three to the Hythe area.

2.9.5 Most support organisations planned the support that they offer community and voluntary groups with at least one other organisation. This suggests that some infrastructure for joint working exists. Further networks may need to be developed in Harbour ward.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a short list of recommendations from issues that have emerged from, and during the course of, the research. These suggestions are intended as a starting point for the Harbour Action Group to begin tackling some of the issues and are by no means an exhaustive list.

3.1 Increasing support

The research has shown that, compared to the Hythe area, Harbour ward has seen less community investment over recent years. Existing community and voluntary groups may benefit from increased support, perhaps through the provision of a community development worker operating specifically in the area. Support might focus on developing the skills and capacity of existing organisations as well as increasing overall community participation.

3.2 Exploring community meeting places

The lack of places for groups to meet has been identified as a problem in Harbour ward. Potential meeting places need to be explored in Harbour itself and imaginative use of existing venues could be suggested for groups to use, e.g. meeting room in Barnhall Community Café (Mezzie Mays). Groups need to be encouraged to use existing meeting spaces as well as assisted in finding new community facilities.

3.3 Including young people

The issue that the community lacks social activities for young people has emerged through both the household survey and interviews with community groups. Residents feel that young people do not have enough to do and therefore cause a nuisance in certain areas of Harbour. More work needs to be focussed on integrating young people into the current activities going on in Harbour, as well as providing community facilities for young people in the ward.

3.4 Publicising existing support

Support (such as funding advice) that is currently available to community and voluntary groups needs to be more effectively publicised and co-ordinated to ensure groups are accessing the support that is available. Support organisations need to ensure that groups know where to go to access support such as advice and training.

3.5 Identifying training and support needs

More work could be undertaken in helping community and voluntary groups identify their training and support needs, since more than one half of all groups said they would like help with this issue. Additionally, this is important because some community and voluntary groups may not be aware of the value of training in the development of the organisation.

3.6 Developing capacity in the voluntary sector

A number of other areas were highlighted in the research as needing further work in order to develop a thriving community and voluntary sector in Harbour. The most evident were:

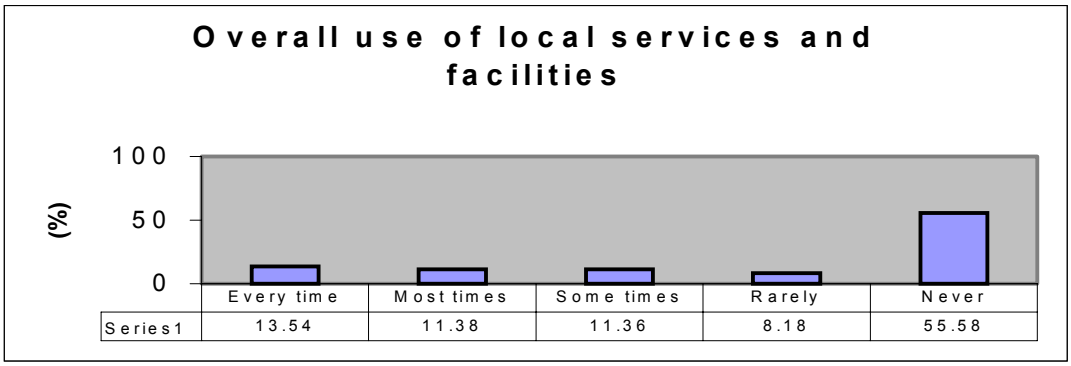
- Support for building equal opportunities in existing and emerging groups.
- Support in developing networks between the community and voluntary groups and networks between the groups and support organisations (e.g. Colchester Borough Council).
- Help for groups in researching needs in the community and ensuring accountability to their users (e.g. consultation, monitoring and evaluation).

4. RESULTS OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

4.1 Use of local services and facilities

The majority of people interviewed (67%) said that they never or rarely go to local coffee shops or pubs with friends (see appendix 1, chart a) and very few (7%) said they attend local social clubs (see appendix 1, chart *b*). However, the majority of people (85%) said that they use local shops for their small-scale grocery shopping most times or sometimes (see appendix 1, chart *c*). Chart 1 pictured below shows that overall use of services and facilities in the area are generally low.

Chart 1



4.2 Feeling of community/neighbourhood

Most people interviewed, some 63%, felt that they know the people who live near them well (see appendix 1, chart *d*) and just over a half of respondents (55%) said that they feel part of the community in their local neighbourhood (see appendix 1, chart *e*). In addition, most people (81%) said that they were happy living in their neighbourhood (see appendix 1, chart *f*).

4.3 Information about local events and issues

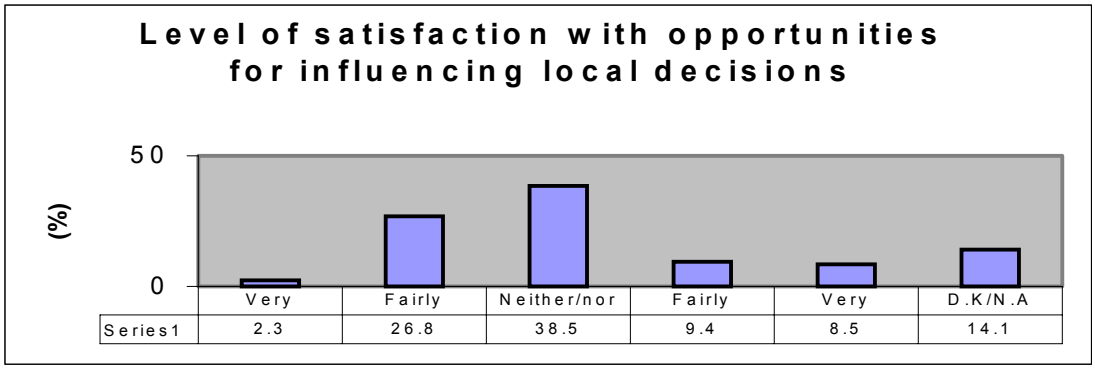
Well over half of those interviewed (62%) said that they feel well informed about events and issues of concern within their community (see appendix 1, chart *g*). More than a quarter (27%), however, disagreed, stating that they do not feel well informed about local events and issues of concern.

4.4 Involvement in decision making

Some 29% of people interviewed said that they felt very or fairly satisfied about opportunities for involvement in decisions that affect their local neighbourhood, and just 18% said that they were fairly or very dissatisfied. A large proportion (39%) said that they were neither

satisfied nor dissatisfied with their involvement in decisions affecting their communities (see chart 2, below).

Chart 2



4.5 Practical action over issues affecting the neighbourhood

4.5.1 Nearly one third (32%) of respondents said that they had taken practical action to resolve an issue concerning their neighbourhood in the last two years (see appendix 1, chart *h*). A total of 32 people said that this had been as part of an organised group and 25 had taken action as an individual (see appendix 1, chart *i*).

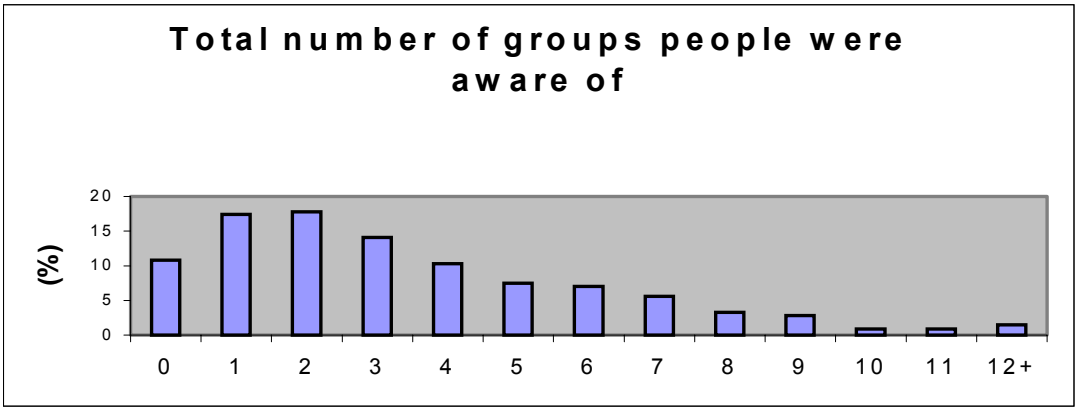
4.5.2 The issues that people had taken practical action to resolve include (see appendix 1, chart *j*):

- Traveller's site at Place Farm (43%)
- Preventing the incinerator (27%)
- Anti-social behaviour, for example, vandalism or harassment (23%)
- Other issues, including parking on grass verges, the quality of bus services and an abandoned car (7%)

4.6 Community and voluntary group awareness

Those interviewed were asked to identify the community and voluntary groups they were aware of from a list of 25 groups in Harbour, the Hythe regeneration area and the surrounding areas. The three groups that were known by the greatest number of people are those that operate at St Barnabus church, Neighbourhood Watch and groups operating at Abbots Activity Centre (see chart 3, below).

Chart 3



4.7 Ideas for groups

Sixty people out of the 213 questioned came up with ideas for community groups for Harbour. The most common response (23% of those who answered) was groups which provide activities for teenagers, followed by a community centre (21%) and activities for children, such as a play group or play area. 12% of people who answered this question suggested health or fitness related groups would be welcome. Other suggestions were a club for older people and a club for people who are divorced or separated (see appendix 1, chart *j*).

4.8 Local services

People were asked to rate a variety of local services from public transport to facilities for young people.

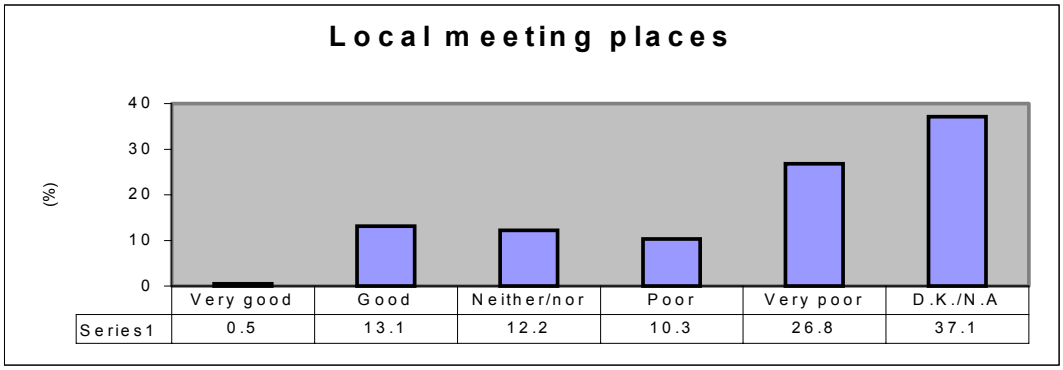
4.8.1 *Public Transport*

The majority (61%) of people said that they felt that public transport in the area was either good or very good. However, when asked which services were most in need of improvement in the area, public transport was the second most cited service in need of improvement (see appendix 1, chart *k*).

4.8.2 *Local meeting places*

Only 14% of people questioned said that public meeting places in their neighbourhood are either good or very good. 38% of respondents said that they are either poor or very poor. 37% did not know how to rate public meeting places or felt the question was not applicable to them and 12% said that they are neither good nor poor. As previously mentioned, 89% of people questioned never attended a social club in their neighbourhood (see appendix 1, chart *b*). This may indicate a lack of public meeting places or that those existing do not meet the needs of residents.

Chart 4



4.8.3 *Leisure and recreation facilities*

Some 40% of those questioned rated leisure and recreation facilities in their neighbourhood as poor or very poor. Those who rated it as very poor amounted to 27% of all those questioned. In addition, nearly a third of those questioned (30%) felt that they did not know how to rate leisure and recreation facilities or that the question was not applicable to them. Only 17% of people rated leisure and recreation facilities as good or very good. Some 12% of respondents said that they did not rate them as either good or poor (see appendix 1, chart *n*).

4.8.4 *Health*

Chart *o* (see appendix 1) shows that 45% of people questioned said that health facilities in their area were either good or very good, although a further one fifth of people said that they did not know how to rate health facilities (20%).

4.8.5 *Shopping*

Shopping scored the highest out of all services and facilities, which were rated. A majority of people (77%) said that local shopping facilities were either good or very good. Significantly only 2% did not know how to rate them or felt the question was not applicable (see appendix 1, chart *p*). This indicates that people are generally happy with shopping facilities in this area.

4.8.6 *Play facilities*

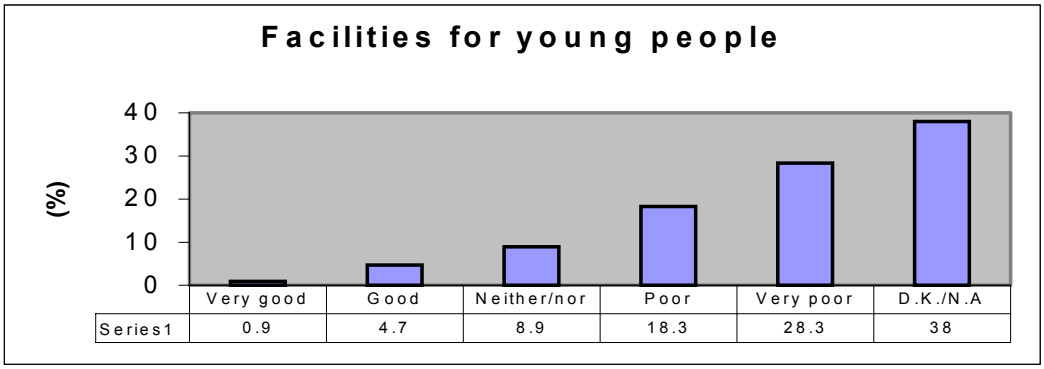
Chart *q* (see appendix 1) shows that half of all people questioned did not know how to rate local play facilities. A likely explanation being that they do not have contact with children and therefore feel unable to comment on local play facilities. For those that did give a rating, an almost equal number felt that they were good (49%) as opposed to poor (51%).

4.8.7 *Facilities for young people*

As with play facilities, a similar proportion of respondents (38%) did not know how to rate or felt that rating the services or facilities for young people was not applicable to them. This again, could be due to the lack of contact these respondents had with young people.

Out of those who did express an opinion, 42% said that services for young people were either poor or very poor. Facilities and services for young people (or the lack of them) are indicated in several questions as an important issue for people in Harbour (see chart 5, below). In an earlier open question 23% of people said that they would like to see groups which enabled activities for teenagers.

Chart 5



4.9 Services most in need of improvement

Chart *r* (see appendix 1) shows how respondents gave priority of to services that they felt needed further improvement. The first, second and third priorities were then added together and averaged. The most common answer was that no facilities needed improvement.

On the surface this may look like an indication of contentment with services by those questioned, however, community development workers have often found this attitude in areas where local people have little involvement in planning and delivering services. They can often have a low expectation of services in their area. In contrast, where people are very involved in local planning and decision making, increased awareness about what they could expect often makes people set higher standards for local services and facilities.

4.10 Safety

Chart *s* (see appendix 1) shows that the majority of people questioned feel safe during the day (63%). Unsurprisingly, a smaller proportion (22%) said that they feel safe at night (see appendix 1, chart *t*). The

significance in relation to other areas is not known and we will be able to comment more fully when surveys are undertaken in the other wards.

4.11 Conclusions

4.11.1 People in Harbour seem generally content with the neighbourhood in which they live, as indicated by an overwhelming 81% of people who said they were happy living in the area (see appendix 1, chart *f*). Additionally, more than half of the people we spoke to (55%) said they feel a part of their community (see appendix 1, chart *e*).

4.11.2 Services for young people, however, seems to be a key area of concern in this area. Some 76% of people expressed dissatisfaction with facilities and services for young people. This is also highlighted by the fact that providing groups for teenagers was the most common response when respondents were asked for ideas for additional community groups in the area. Other service areas in which people expressed high levels of dissatisfaction are play facilities, public meeting places and leisure and recreation facilities.

4.11.3 A large proportion of people (49%) expressed neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction about their involvement in the local decision making process (see chart 2, above). However, nearly a third of all respondents said they have taken practical action in an attempt to resolve an issue concerning their neighbourhood in the last two years (see appendix 1, Chart *h*). This suggests that Harbour ward have a large proportion of residents that are very proactive in taking action when an issue of concern arises.

4.11.3

5. RESULTS OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY GROUPS SURVEY

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter includes information about groups operating in both Harbour and the Hythe regeneration area. The Hythe regeneration area, which used to be part of Harbour ward and is now in New Town ward, has been included as it is recognised as a major area of community investment that up until May 2002 was part of Harbour. Groups in this area were also interviewed because of their proximity to the new Harbour ward. It is recognised however that most groups existing in the Hythe regeneration area operate from the new Hythe Community Centre, which is a long way from some Harbour residents. As such groups operating there may not fulfill the needs of all Harbour residents.

5.1.2 Most of the groups interviewed were located in the Hythe regeneration area or surrounding areas. Very few, only six out of the 28 groups identified were located within the Harbour ward boundary.

5.1.3 *Activities*

Advice was the most common activity listed by the groups. 16 out of the 28 groups said that they provide advice. The 'social activities' category was the next favourite listed. Other popular activities included play (12 groups), self help and support (11 groups) and training and community education (11 groups).

5.1.4 *Communities served*

Most groups (17 out of the 27 that answered the question) serve all residents, whilst ten serve only a specific section of the community. Children are the most common group targeted. However, other groups listed were: people with learning disabilities and their families, people at risk of offending, businesses and people with eating disorders.

5.2 Building Organisations

5.2.1 *Funding*

Figure 1, pictured below, shows how much of a problem funding is felt to be for groups. A significant majority, 21 out of all 28 groups said that funding was a problem, 14 of which felt that it was a significant problem. Four out of the six groups operating from Harbour ward, felt that funding was a significant problem, as opposed to only two out of 13 groups operating in the Hythe regeneration area. This reflects the concentration of funding in the Hythe regeneration area, and is not surprising due to the new community centre and SRB funding for groups in the Hythe regeneration area.

Figure 1: Groups that felt funding to be a problem

	Harbour	Hythe	Surrounding	Total
Significant problem	4	6	4	14
Slight problem	1	1	1	3
Occasional problem	0	2	2	4
No problem	1	3	2	6
N/A	0	1	0	1

5.2.2 *Recruiting and retaining volunteers*

Well over half of the groups surveyed (17 out of 28) said that recruiting and retaining volunteers caused them a problem. Eight out of these said that this posed a significant problem. This seemed to be more of a problem for groups based in Harbour and not in the Hythe regeneration and surrounding areas (four out of the six Harbour groups identified recruiting and training volunteers to be problematic).

5.2.3 *Access to resources*

More than half of all groups said that access to resources was not a problem. This appears to be more of a problem for groups based in Harbour than those in the Hythe regeneration area. Over half of groups operating from the Hythe regeneration area said access to resources was not a problem, whereas four out of the six Harbour based groups said that this is problematic for their group.

5.2.4 *Access to training*

Access to training was not felt to be a major problem for most groups. However, this may be due to the groups not being aware of the benefits of training and how it could expand the activities and capacity of their organisation.

5.2.5 *Other issues*

Significantly, when asked which other issues were felt to be a problem in relation to building their organisation, three groups in Harbour felt that the lack of designated community space was a problem. This issue was raised without prompting from the interviewers. The results of the household survey show that this is also a problem for residents of Harbour.

5.3 Money Issues

5.3.1 Sources of funding

Half of the groups interviewed (14) stated that they used fundraising as a method of raising revenue for their group. Regeneration funding was common for groups operating in the Hythe. 10 out of the 28 groups said that they received local authority funding. Other sources of funding were revenue from trading, charities and other forms of grant aid, renting out business units, donations and revenue from sessional charges for services.

5.3.2 Levels of funding

Figure 2, below, demonstrates the level of income for groups in each of the areas this financial year. Half of the groups interviewed (14) received less that £19,000 between April 2002 and April 2003. Out of those 14, seven groups received less than £1,000. Four groups received significantly more funding of between £20,000 and £49,000 and two organisations received more than £100,000. Interestingly, the groups operating from Harbour ward and not from the Hythe received less funding. This is significant as four out of the six groups indicated in an earlier question that funding was a significant problem.

Figure 2: Income for groups this financial year

	Harbour	Hythe	Surrounding	Total
Less than £1000	2	4	1	7
£1000- £9,999	1	2	3	6
£10,000-£19,999	0	1	0	1
£20,000- £49,999	1	2	1	4
£50,000- £99,000	0	1	0	1
£100,000+	0	1	1	2
DK, N/A	2	2	3	7

5.3.3 Premises

Sixteen out of the 28 groups interviewed rented the space from which they operate. However, only one of the groups in Harbour was operating from a rented community facility. Three groups in Harbour said that they were only able to meet in member's homes or in a public place.

All groups operating in the Hythe said that they had high to medium levels of satisfaction with the arrangement in relation to premises, however, a half of the groups based in Harbour expressed medium to

low levels of satisfaction. This was also indicated in a previous question to be a problem (see above).

5.3.4 *Resources and equipment*

Groups were asked to indicate from a list provided which resources and equipment they had problems accessing. The list included access to a telephone, desk, photocopier, computer, Internet, storage and transport. Interestingly, most groups said that access to these facilities was not a problem for them. However, there was one exception: transport. Nine groups said that transport posed some kind of problem for them. A half of the groups operating from Harbour (three out of six) also felt that transport was a problem for them.

5.4 Building Skills

5.4.1 *Skills levels*

On the whole, groups appear very confident about skill levels in their organisations. Respondents were asked to say how strongly they agreed that the skills and experiences of their active members fully met the needs of the group for a number of different skill areas. Most groups did not indicate that there was a problem with the skills of their members in relation to the areas listed.

5.4.2 *Areas of concern*

There were just a few skill areas about which a number of groups expressed some concern. These were: the media, how the Council works and computer skills. In relation to computer skills, all three groups who indicated less confidence in this skill area are based in the Hythe.

5.4.3 *Areas of strengths*

Working as a team clearly emerged as the skill area in which groups generally feel most confidence (24 out of the 28 groups said they are confident about working as a team). Working in partnership with other organisations and planning activities came joint second, with a total of 20 groups expressing confidence in each of these skill areas. All seven groups that said managing a building is relevant to their work expressed confidence in their ability to manage that building.

Other skill areas in which a high degree of confidence seems to be experienced are: assessing and monitoring equal opportunities (19 groups expressed confidence); the media - press releases, getting on with the media (18 groups expressed confidence) and publicity – producing newsletters, leaflets, etc. (17 groups expressed confidence). It is interesting to note that groups seem to feel confident about their

skills in the area of equal opportunities since our findings in the 'Building Equality' section of this report suggest that there is room for development in this area.

13 groups expressed confidence in their fundraising skills. Of these, seven had sought funding advice over the last year - exactly half of all groups that have sought funding advice. A possible explanation is that this support has either boosted the confidence of these groups in this skill area, or those groups that have more confidence about their fundraising skills in the first place are more likely to seek funding advice.

5.4.4 Managing staff

Figure 3 reveals that 11 groups said that managing staff is not a relevant skill area to the needs of their group. It is slightly alarming that five groups expressing this view also said that they employ paid workers. There are also six groups that do not employ paid workers in the area, all of whom said that management of staff is not an applicable skill for their group. However, it is very unlikely that the people from these groups work in isolation – presumably if they do not employ paid workers, then they rely on volunteers to carry out vital tasks for their group.

It is interesting that only one of the eight groups that said recruiting and retaining volunteers is a significant problem admitted that they were less confident about their management skills. Nine groups that said recruiting and retaining volunteers is a problem also said that management of staff in their group is not a problem.

Figure 3: Confidence in staff management skills

	Total no. groups
Strongly agree	6
Agree	7
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	1
N/A	11

5.4.5 Training

A total of 18 groups said that a person/people in their organisation have received training in the last year. More than one half of all organisations that were interviewed said that they would like help identifying their groups needs.

5.4.6 Alternative training methods

Groups were asked about other activities that they have been involved in to develop the skills of members. The most common alternative method for developing members' skills is learning from experience or action (23 groups).

Other fairly popular methods include sharing skills through joint working (15 groups) and organising visits or exchanges to centres and projects (15 groups), mentoring schemes (12 groups) and reading books on practical skills (11 groups). In contrast, only four groups said that they had organised secondments from other organisations.

5.5 Building Equality

5.5.1 Equal opportunities policies

15 out of all 28 groups said that they have a written equal opportunities policy and 12 out of all 28 groups said that they have a statement of equality within their constitution, either in addition to the equal opportunities policy or instead of it. Eight groups said that they have neither an equal opportunities policy, nor a statement of equality within their constitution

5.5.2 Tackling the issues

Whilst the majority of organisations seem genuinely committed to equality, it appears that very few have a clear idea of how this issue should be tackled on a practical level.

Many groups have a fairly informal approach to implementing equal opportunities. Some10 groups said that they generally welcome everyone by trying to be fair and working positively with all aspects of the community that wish to be involved. Equality is an issue that seems to be tackled on an ad hoc basis, as need arises. Very little systematic action is being taken to ensure services are inclusive for all users. One group mentioned that they assist wheelchair users into the building by lifting them over the steps manually, rather than addressing the issues that arise from not having an accessible building. This kind of action is often at the expense of independence for the user.

Awareness of equal opportunities in relation to employment practices appears to be high amongst the groups. Several groups mentioned their employment practices and regulations when asked about equal opportunities.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, larger organisations generally seem to have more formal methods of building equality. For example, one group said that they are currently working on producing a booklet that will include an equal opportunities policy and another said they have an equalities plan.

Educating others within the community is a practice mentioned by two separate groups. One group said that they try to educate children in issues of equality, and another said that they are actively trying to encourage other groups to develop equal opportunities policies.

5.5.3 Challenging discrimination

When asked about any other specific action that they have taken to challenge discrimination, responses were sparse. Four groups said that they have held awareness raising events. Only one group said that they have run a campaign and one group mentioned the provision of translators/interpreters.

5.5.4 Support received in building equal opportunities

Only seven groups said that they receive support for their work on equal opportunities. This means that the majority of organisations (21 groups) are not (or do not feel that they are) supported in their work on building equality. When asked if they know where to get help if it is needed, as might be expected, 21 groups answered that they do not.

5.6 Building Involvement

5.6.1 Consulting and involving the community

Figure 4 demonstrates the methods that groups use to consult and involve their community/users. The most common means of being accountable to the community and/or users is through newsletters (17 groups used this method). The second most common method is regular feedback meetings (15 groups used this method). Just nine of the 28 groups interviewed have an annual election of representatives. A total of 12 groups said that they use other methods of accountability. These other methods include verbal feedback, a feedback event, satisfaction surveys, comments book, open discussions with group and leaflets and posters.

When asked about their approaches to finding out about the needs of the local community and/or users, the most common response was the use of questionnaires (14 groups). Also widely adopted is outreach work (12 groups) and consultation meetings (12 groups).

Figure 4 Methods of consulting and involving community/users

	Harbour	Hythe	Surrounding	Total
Newsletters	4	9	4	17
Regular feedback meetings	1	8	6	15
Consultation meetings	3	6	3	12
Outreach work	1	6	5	12
Questionnaires	4	6	4	14
Annual election of representatives	1	4	4	9

5.6.2 Use of formal networks

Some of the groups that were interviewed have been involved in joint working with other agencies. Nine groups said that they have been involved in joint working with Colchester Borough Council. A total of 10 groups said that they have been involved in joint working with other statutory agencies. Nine groups said that they have been involved in joint working with another agency or organisation. However, a larger proportion (16 groups) said that they are members of formal networks.

5.7 Conclusions

Very few (six) of the 28 community and voluntary groups that were identified in Harbour, the Hythe regeneration area and the surrounding area are actually located within the boundaries of Harbour ward. This is just one sign that there has been less community investment in Harbour ward than there has been in the Hythe regeneration area.

5.7.1 Funding and resources

This under-investment in Harbour ward may also be reflected in the fact that access to funding and resources appear to be more prominent issues for groups in this area than groups in the Hythe regeneration area. Having said that, funding is the source of some concern for groups in all three of the areas where interviews took place. Interestingly, the groups that were most confident about their fundraising skills had generally received funding advice in the last year.

One apparent difference between the situation for groups in Harbour ward and those in the Hythe regeneration area is the availability of premises which to meet. Whilst groups in the Hythe regeneration area have access to a new community centre, groups in Habour do not have a comparable community facility. This means that half of the groups in Harbour are constrained to meeting in members' homes; this could be

a significant factor in the lack of community and voluntary groups in this area.

Of all resources that groups were questioned about, transport stood out as the one resource that poses a problem to groups.

5.7.2 *Building Skills*

On the whole, groups expressed high levels of confidence that the skills of their active members meet the needs of their organisation. Nearly two thirds of groups had received training in the last year. Most groups said that they had also developed their skills through experience or action.

Particular skills that stood out as areas of strength are team working, working in partnership with other organisations and planning activities. Where it was applicable to groups, managing a building was also felt to be an area of strength. The few areas where there appears to be concern amongst some groups are computer skills, the media and how the council works.

More than half of the groups said they would like help identifying their training needs. This is positive because there may be skill areas needing development that are systematically undervalued and overlooked by the groups. Developing such skills could be extremely beneficial to their work and the structure of their organisation.

5.7.3 *Building equality*

Nearly one third of groups have neither an equal opportunities policy nor a statement of equality within their constitution.

The majority of groups seem genuinely committed to the idea of treating people with fairness, yet it appears that very few groups know how to go about implementing equal opportunities on a practical level.

This may be symptomatic of the fact that very few groups receive support for their work on equal opportunities, and the vast majority do not know where to seek advice should it be needed.

6. RESULTS OF SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS SURVEY

6.1 Introduction

A total of 15 organisations that provide support to voluntary and community organisations were surveyed and the results of the survey are contained in this chapter. The organisations that were interviewed are listed in appendix 2, along with their aims and activities in relation to supporting community and voluntary groups.

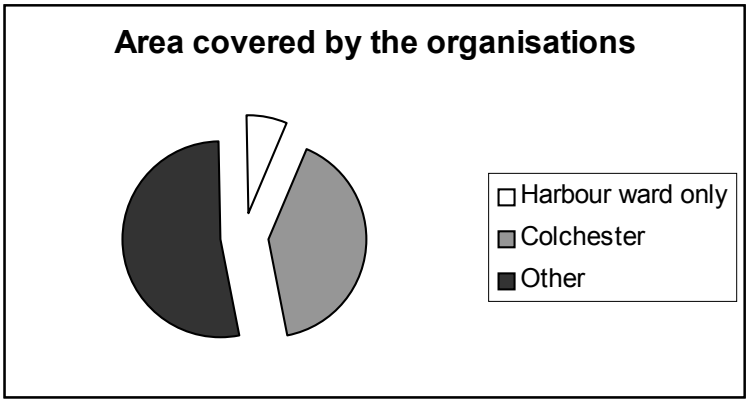
'Support' in the context of this survey may take the form of practical help, training, advice, funding, facilities, resources, equipment, information or staff time. Any one organisation may only be providing a limited range of support from the full checklist available. Throughout this study, where an organisation is providing any such support they will be defined as 'support organisations'.

Some of these organisations focus their attention in Harbour ward and some in the Hythe regeneration area, and some were interviewed on the basis of the support that they could offer in future.

6.1.1 *Area covered by the organisations*

Charts 1, pictured below, shows the areas covered by the support organisations that were interviewed. Only one of the organisations interviewed focus their activity exclusively within the Harbour ward boundaries. Six organisations operate across the whole of Colchester. The remaining eight organisations said that they operate in more specific neighbourhoods and areas designated by the remit of their organisation.

Chart 1



6.1.2 *Focus of support*

Seven of the fifteen organisations said that they support community and voluntary groups that operate in the Hythe regeneration area. Six

out of the seven said that they support the Hythe Community Association, which in turn supports many smaller groups that use the Hythe Community Centre. In contrast, none of the support organisations mentioned any groups that they target specifically in Harbour ward.

6.1.3 *Organisational Policies*

(a) Equal opportunities policy

The majority of support organisations, 11 of the 15 questioned have an equal opportunities policy.

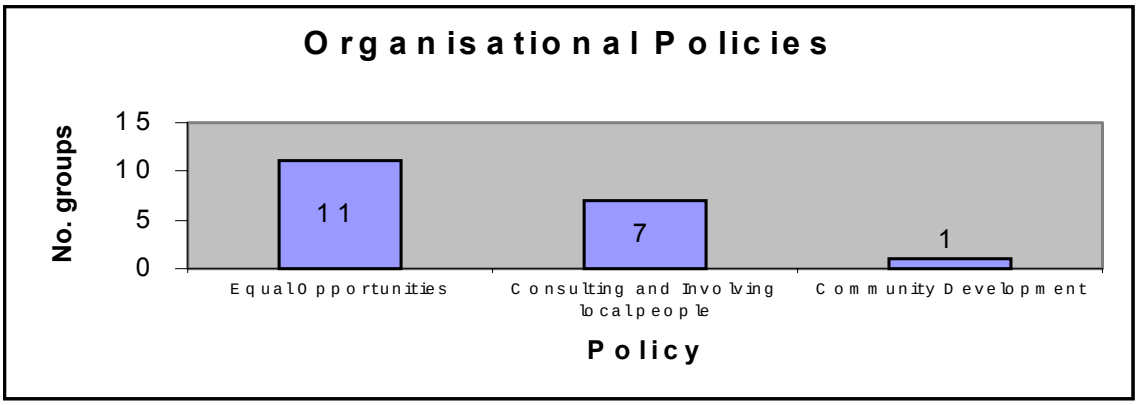
(b) Policy on consultation and involving local people

Just under one half of the organisations interviewed (seven) said that they had a policy on consulting and involving local people.

(c) Community Development policy

Far fewer, only four of the 15 support organisations interviewed said they have a policy on community development.

Chart 2



6.2 Building Organisations

6.2.1 *Funding/grant aid*

Only one out of the 15 support organisations interviewed said they provide funding or grant-aid to a group operating in Harbour ward. In contrast, three support organisations provide funding or grant aid to groups in the Hythe regeneration area. Significantly, a greater overall

proportion of the community and voluntary groups in Harbour ward said that funding is a problem compared to groups in the Hythe area.

6.2.2 *Practical support of groups - equipment or resources*

Meeting space is the most common resource that support organisations offer community groups, with six out of the 15 organisations offering this resource. However, only four out of all 15 organisations interviewed offered meeting space free of charge to voluntary and community groups.
Six of the organisations interviewed placed restrictions on the use of the resources, but most of this related to ensuring that only community or voluntary groups had access and not, for instance, commercial or political organisations.

Only one of the 15 organisations offers transport for community and voluntary groups to use, and this is with a charge. Storage space is also a limited resource, since it is offered by just two support organisations – one of which provide it free of charge.

6.2.3 *Paid workers*

Only one support organisation provides a paid worker in Harbour and this equalled one full-time post shared across a number of different areas (including the Hythe regeneration area). According to the organisations interviewed, three provide paid workers in the Hythe regeneration area, in one case jointly funded. These amount to approximately three and a half full time posts.

6.3 Building Skills

6.3.1 *Provision or organisation of training for community and voluntary groups*

Nine of the 13 organisations that answered this question said they offered training to voluntary or community groups. Only six of these had delivered training to groups in Harbour or in the Hythe in the last three years - none of which were courses for groups which operate outside of the Hythe regeneration area.

Interestingly, the interviews with community and voluntary groups did not reveal any obvious differences in the levels of confidence that groups in the Hythe regeneration area and groups in Harbour or the surrounding areas demonstrated in their skills and experiences.

6.3.2 *Subjects covered by training providers*

Of the thirteen groups who offer training to community and voluntary groups, the types of training offered varies.

Although a broad range of training is available to community and voluntary groups, one subject area for which local support organisations currently do not provide is training in managing a building. However, this is unsurprising as very few community and voluntary groups manage a building. It may also be worth noting at this point that all seven of the seven groups that said this skill is relevant to their work expressed high confidence in their skills and experience within this area.

The voluntary and community groups survey identified three particular skills areas which groups feel they need to develop. These are computer skills, working with the Council and working with the media. It is interesting to note that training is available for all three of these skill areas.

6.3.3 *Provision of tailor made training*

Four of the support organisations provide tailor-made training for community and voluntary groups. The type of training on offer includes courses on participating in committee meetings, giving talks and producing information and raising money for charity.

6.3.4 *Helping community and voluntary groups identify their training needs*

Nine support organisations said that they would be willing to help voluntary and community groups identify their training needs. The type of help with identification of training needs that was suggested by some of the support groups interviewed included:

- General support of the association and identification of gaps
- Looking at any training needs identified through this research
- Review of the internal needs of the group

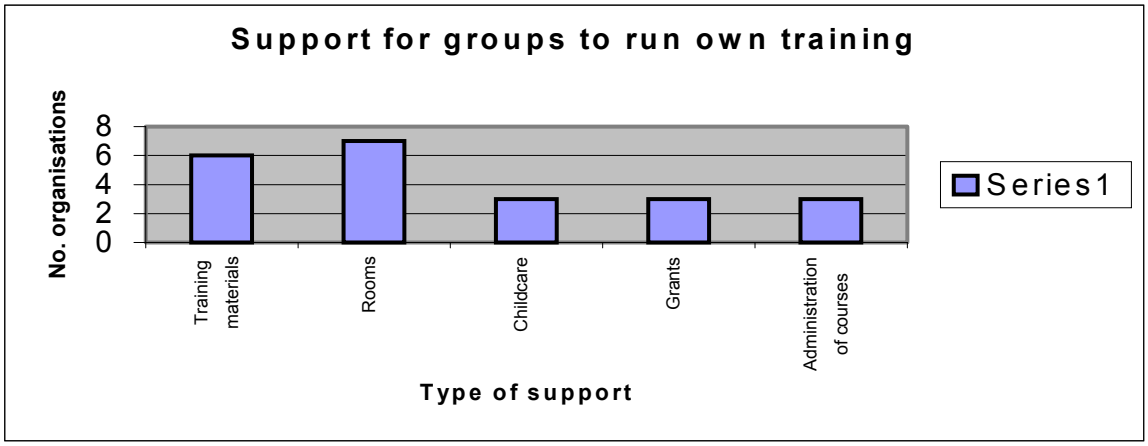
Significantly, more than half of all voluntary and community groups that were interviewed said they would like help identifying their group's training needs.

6.3.5 *Support available for groups to organise their own training*

There is some capacity for voluntary and community groups to run their own training with the support of these organisations. Eight of the 12 groups that answered this question said that they could offer some form of support to community and voluntary groups wishing to run their own training. Just under half (six) of all the support organisations

interviewed said that they can offer training materials (for example flip charts) for use by voluntary and community groups. In addition, seven can provide rooms for voluntary and community organisations to use for training. Only three organisations offered childcare, grants or help with the administration of courses.

Chart 3



6.3.6 *Provision of advice*

The most common subject of advice given to community and voluntary groups by support organisations was advice on funding. The next most popular form of advice was planning, followed by developing the organisation and managing projects, which six organisations said they provided.
Fewer organisations (four) said they provide advice on team building, meeting and committee skills and using the media.

6.4 Building Equality

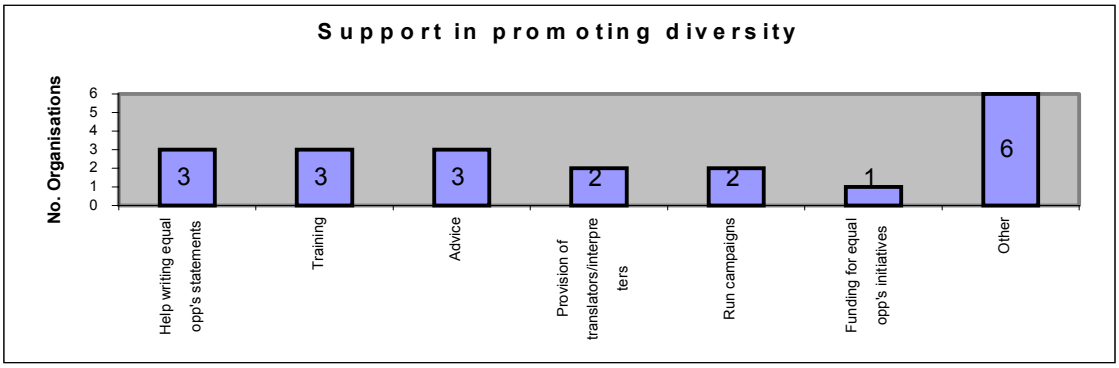
6.4.1 *Support in promoting diversity*

Very few of the support organisations provide the type of help that is seen to assist in ensuring equality of opportunities within community organisations.

Only three of the 15 organisations interviewed provide help to voluntary and community organisations with writing equal opportunities policies. Equally, only three groups provide training on diversity/cultural awareness issues and advice on equal opportunities practice. Even fewer organisations (two) provide translators/interpreters or run campaigns. The lowest response, however was from organisations around the provision of funding for equal opportunities initiatives, with only one organisation indicating they provide this service to voluntary and community groups.

The response indicated by the largest number of organisations was the 'other' category; six organisations said they provide assistance other than that indicated in the questionnaire. The nature of this help is usually to provide informal advice and information when community and voluntary groups ask for it.

Chart 4



6.5 Building Involvement

This section concerns the ways in which organisations help to build the capacity of the community and voluntary groups to involve people and contribute to local decision making.

6.5.1 *Helping to build involvement*

Most support organisations (eight) said that they help voluntary and community groups work jointly with statutory agencies in general and the local Council in particular (seven). Presumably, this is because many of the organisations interviewed are statutory agencies.
Helping community and voluntary groups with joint working was felt to be a particularly strong aspect of work undertaken by support organisations.
Fewer support organisations (five) felt they could help groups to be accountable to their community/users.
Even fewer groups (four) felt that they that they could offer any help in finding out about the needs of their local community or users.

6.5.2 *Helping community and voluntary groups have their say*

The support organisations were asked how they help voluntary and community organisations to have their say in local decision making. The majority of support organisations (nine out of 15) said that they helped community and voluntary groups develop local projects and to deliver local services (eight out of 15). Six organisations help community and voluntary groups get involved with regeneration programmes. Five organisations facilitate involvement with policies of the Council and other statutory organisations.

6.5.3 *Links*

(a) Involvement in networks of organisations whose members provide support for voluntary groups

A total 10 of the 15 organisations interviewed said they were involved in networks in Harbour and the Hythe regeneration area. Only one of these related to networks specific to Harbour ward. Most networks covered either particular client groups, for instance children, or had a wider remit than Harbour itself. Three networks were indicated for the Hythe regeneration area.

(b) Joint planning

Nine of the 15 organisations planned their support for voluntary and community groups with at least one other organisation. This indicates that the infrastructure for joint working for the benefit of voluntary groups in Harbour exists, even though formal networks have not been set up.

6.6 Conclusions

6.6.1 *Funding and resources*

It is apparent that whilst several support organisations have funded community and voluntary groups in the Hythe regeneration area, only one support organisation has done so for a community or voluntary group in Harbour ward. This reinforces the finding from the interviews with community and voluntary groups, that access to funding appears to be a more prominent issue for groups in this area than groups in the Hythe regeneration area.

The support organisations offer some provision of meeting space that community and voluntary groups can use, some with and some without a charge. Whether these fulfil the needs of those groups that stated lack of meeting facilities as a problem needs to be considered on an individual basis and in relation to factors such as cost, location and availability.

One support organisation said that they offer transport with a charge. This is interesting because access to transport was raised as a problem by a number of the community and voluntary groups.

In terms of paid employees, the support organisations had significantly fewer paid employees operating in Harbour than in the Hythe.

6.6.2 *Building skills*

Most support organisations offered some training provision, which has been accessed by groups in Hythe regeneration area during the last three years, but not by groups in Harbour ward.

Of the courses on offer, the one skill for which training was not offered is in the management of a building. Tailor-made training was also available and there appears to be capacity for groups to run their own training given the resources that are available.

Nine support organisations said that they are willing to help community and voluntary groups identify their training needs. Whether this help is offered on a proactive basis or whether it is up to individual groups to seek this help is not clear.
Provision of advice on funding, planning and developing the organisation and managing projects is also available. The areas of advice that are not offered are team building, meeting and committee skills and using the media.

6.6.3 *Building equality*

Very few (three) organisations offer support to voluntary and community groups in the area of building equal opportunities. Also lacking is the availability of training, translators/interpreters and funding for equal opportunities initiatives.

Many of the support organisations said that they were happy to offer informal advice and information when approached by individual groups. However, this does not appear to be taken up by voluntary and community groups. A more proactive approach in relation to supporting equality building policy and practice could be beneficial in ensuring that practices of voluntary and community groups are inclusive of all sectors of the community.

6.6.4 *Building involvement*

A strong theme amongst support organisations was the support they gave community and voluntary groups in relation to working jointly with statutory agencies and other groups. Fewer support organisations, however, said that they could help groups be accountable to their users or find out about community needs.

Of those support organisations that have a role in networks with community and voluntary groups, only one related their involvement

specifically to Harbour ward and three to the Hythe regeneration area. Most planned the support that they offer community and voluntary groups with at least one other organisation, however, which suggests that some infrastructure for joint working exists. Further networks may need to be developed in Harbour ward.

APPENDIX 1: HOUSEHOLD SURVEY CHARTS

Chart (a)

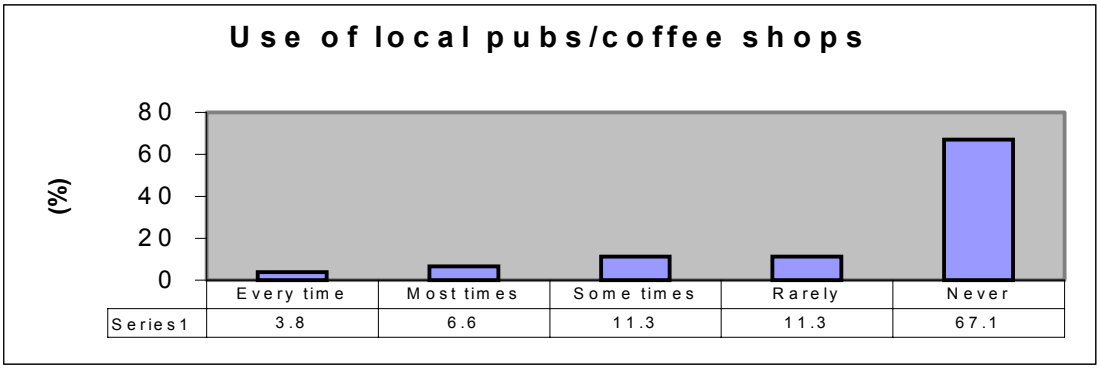


Chart (b)

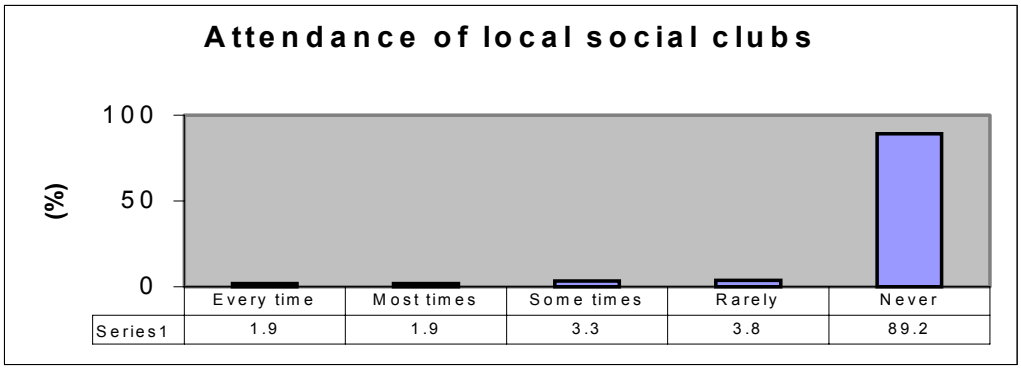


Chart (c)

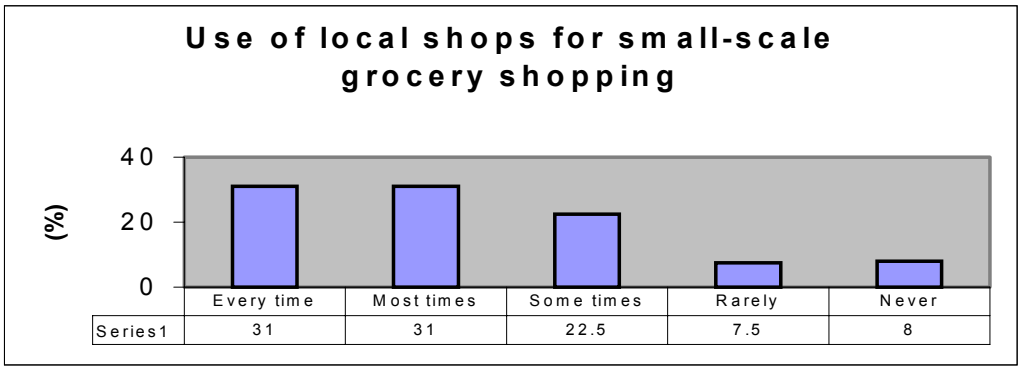


Chart (d)

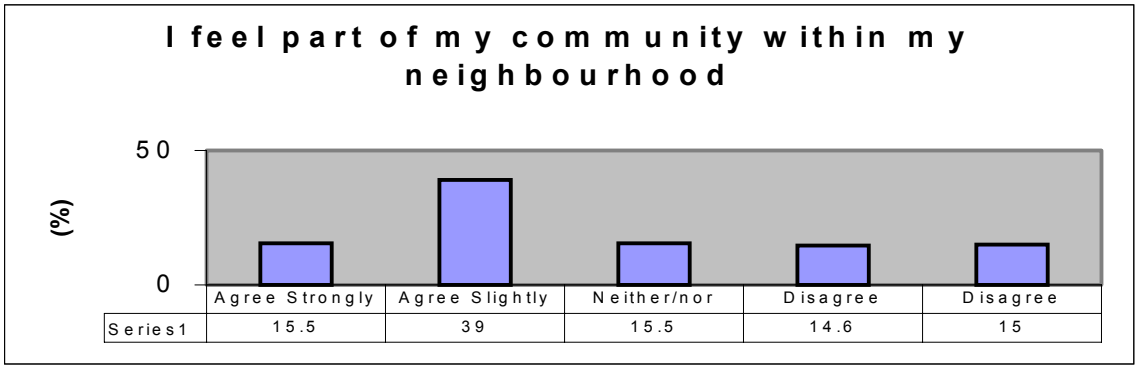


Chart (e)

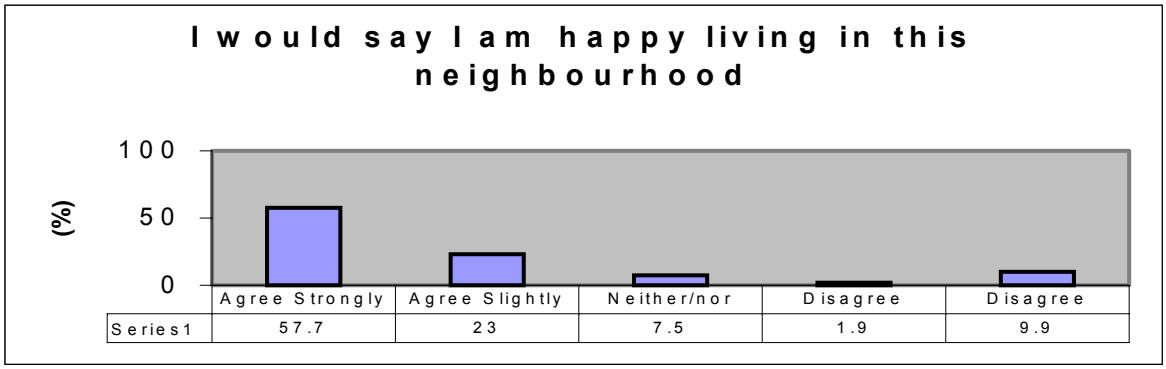


Chart (f)

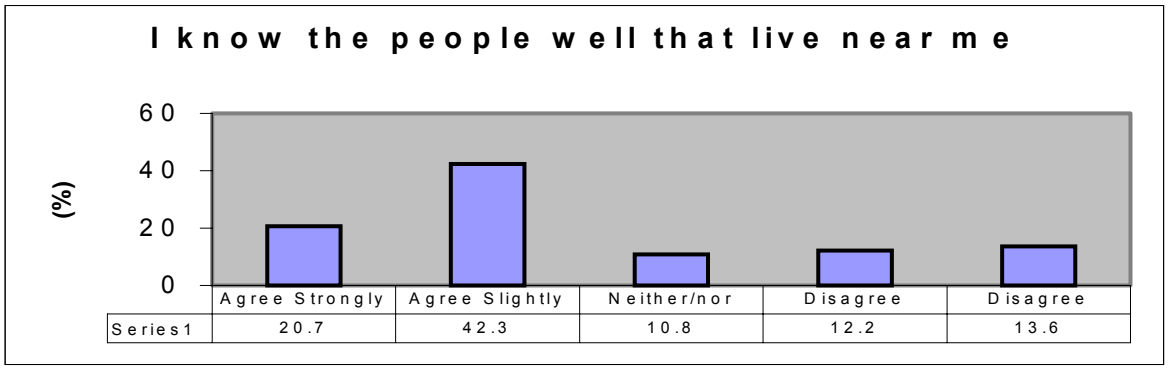
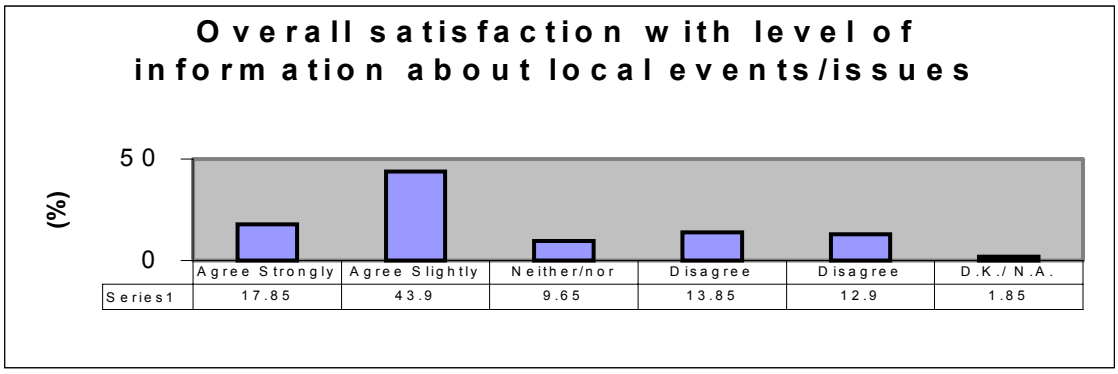


Chart (g)



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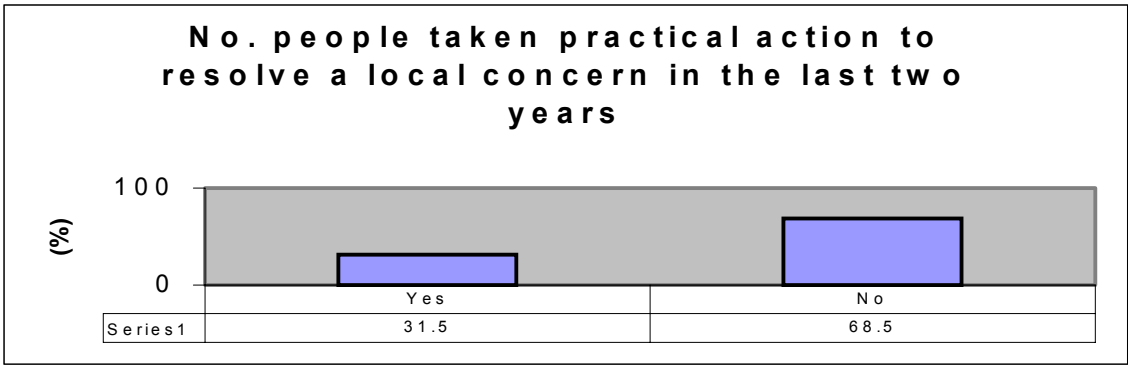

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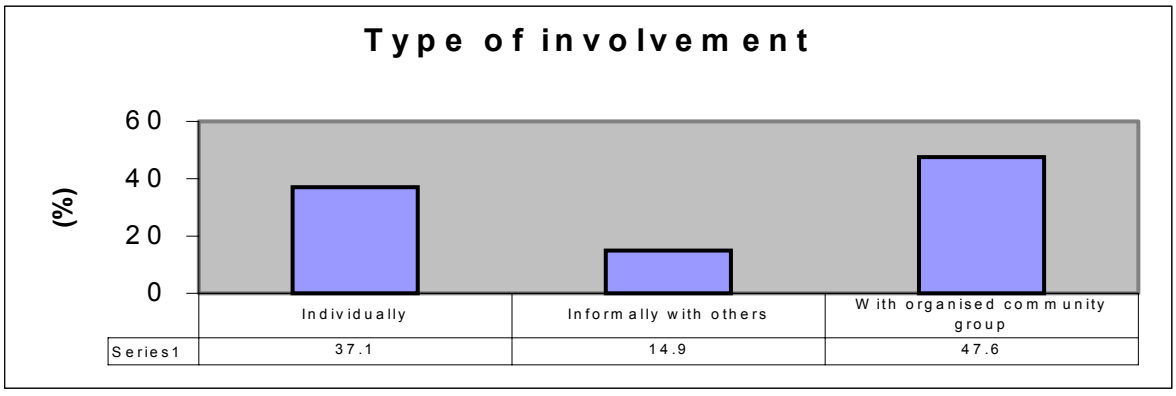

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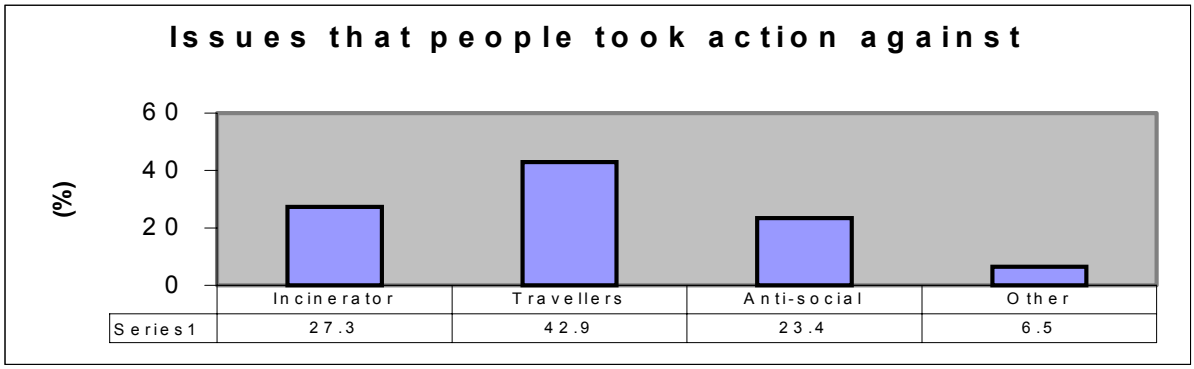

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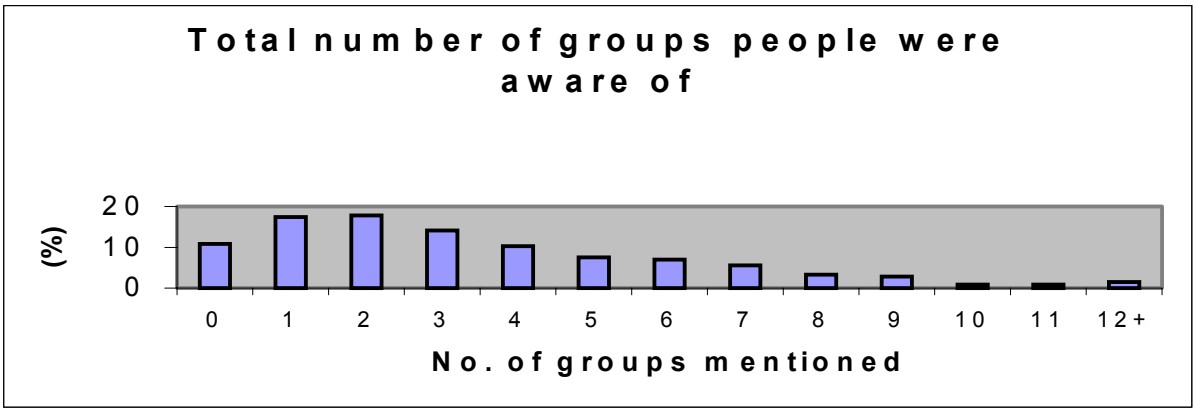

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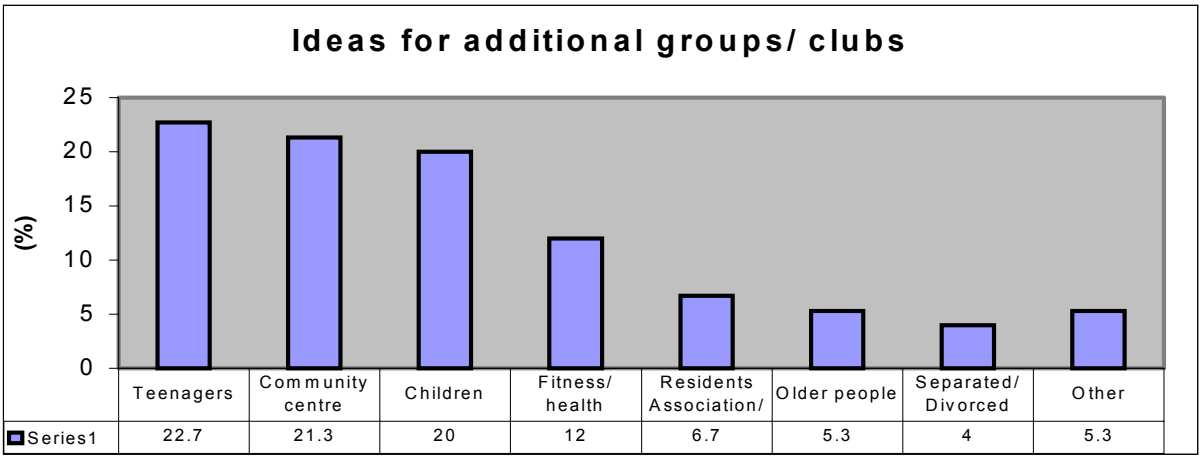

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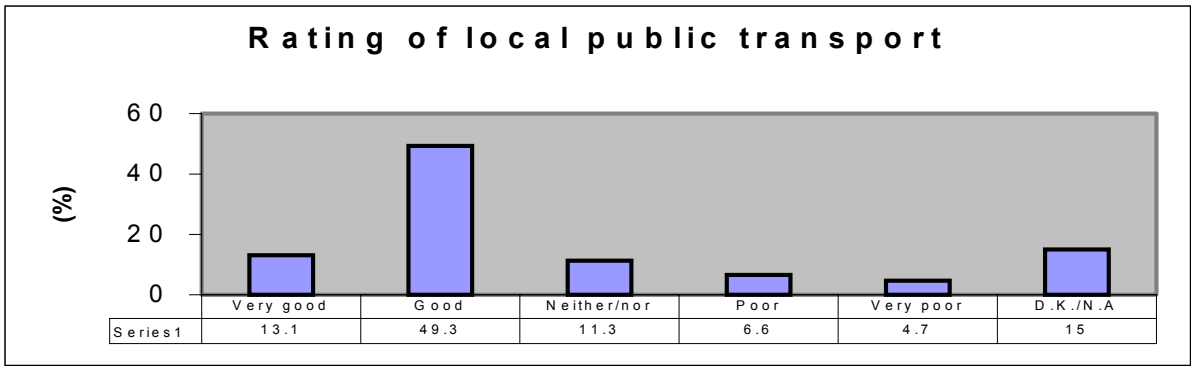

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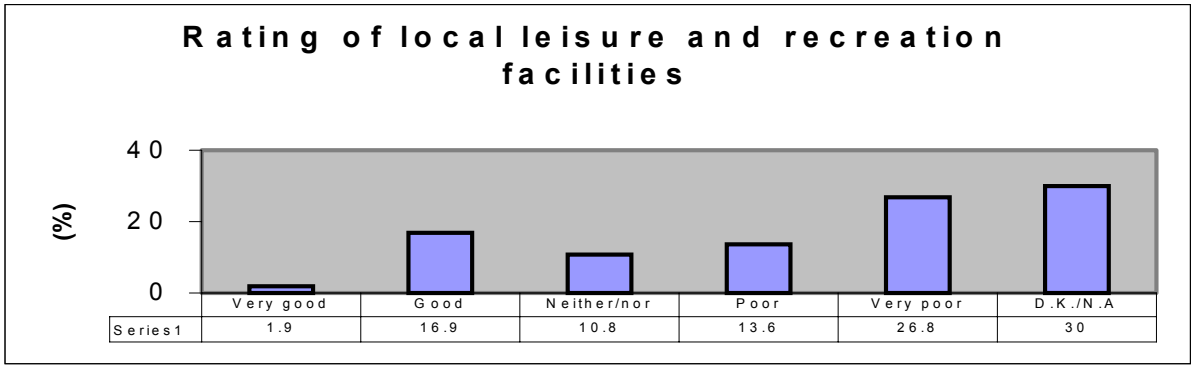

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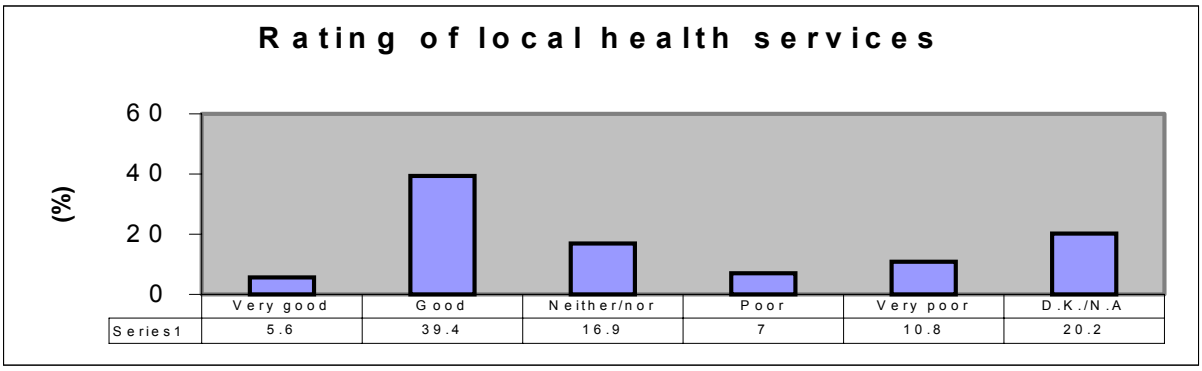

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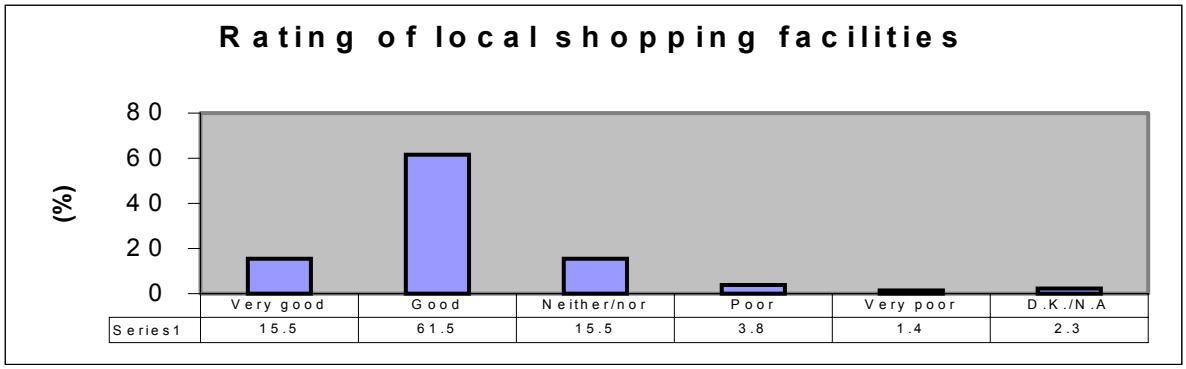

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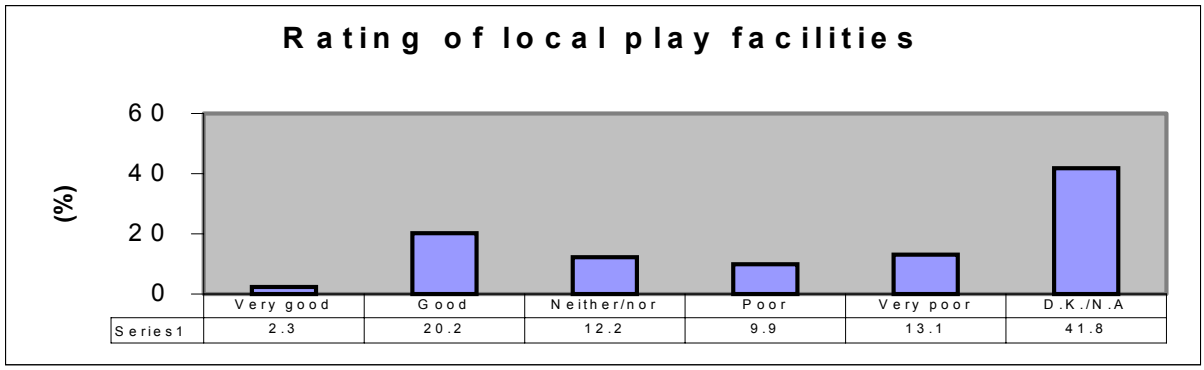

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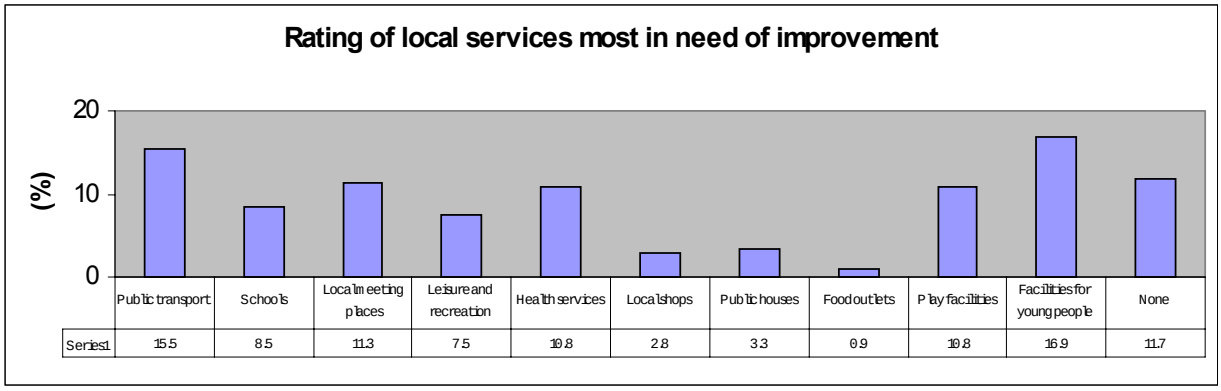

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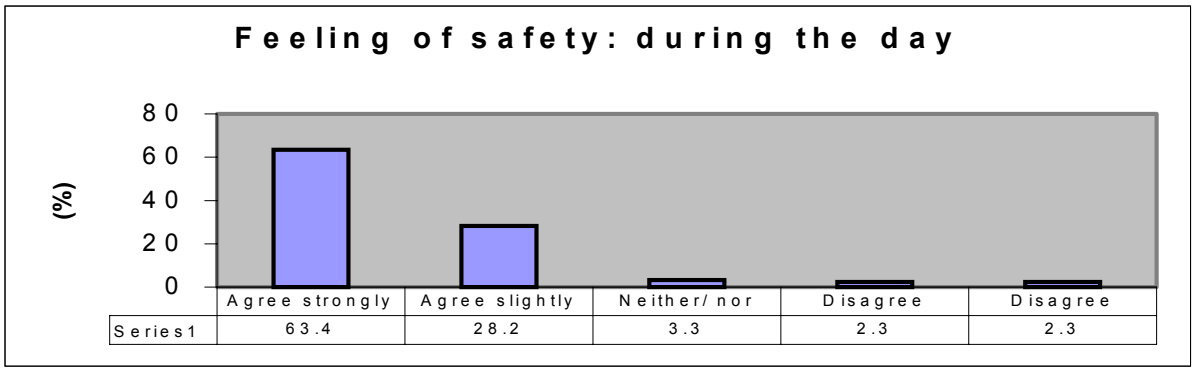

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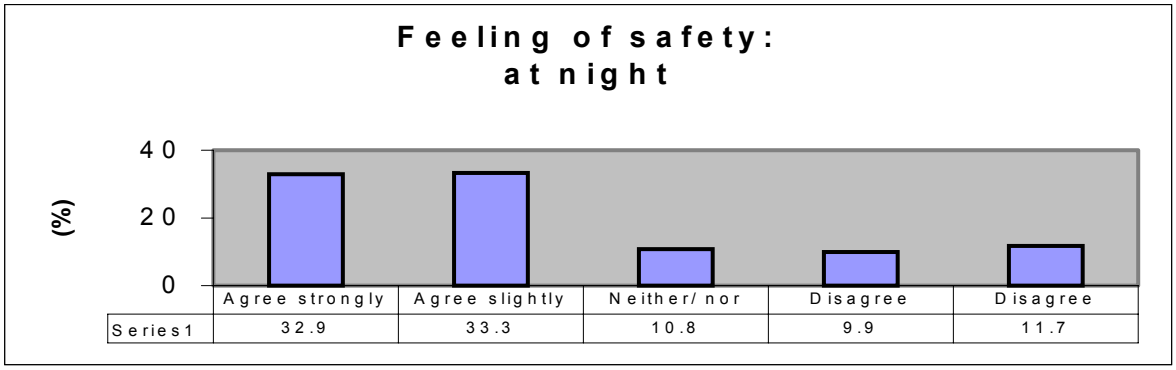

APPENDIX TWO – THE SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Organisation	Aims	Activities
Cannock Grange Day Nursery	Care & education of children 3mths to 5 yrs.	Day Nursery.
East Colchester Community Outreach (Community Development worker at the Hythe)	To Develop social infrastructure alongside physical regeneration.	Supporting associations eg Residents Associations & Community Associations
Colchester Primary Care Trust (PCT)	Health care (commissioning & providing)	Primary health care, clinical governance, commissioning, HIMP
The Wilson Marriage Centre	Facilities for local people in a wide range of educational facilities-but in a wider sense.	Broad range of community activities. A family centre.
East Colchester Partnership	To carry out & oversee the program for capital & revenue totalling £12.2 million, for which SRB monies of £2.2 million were received.	Quarterly board meeting, quarterly co-ordinating group meeting. Monitoring spend and output.
Local Health Visitors	Promotion of health, prevention of ill-health	Home visiting (assessment/monitoring child health). Cardiac support-rehabilitation
Colchester Borough Council Community Development	To support voluntary sector-especially with funding- also general advice.	Funding workshops, one-to-one meetings, funding surgeries & monitoring.

Colchester Outer Limits (YMCA)	To: provide a welcome to members for themselves, in a meeting place which is theirs to share, where friendships can be made and counsel sought; Develop activities which stimulate and challenges its members in an environment that enables them to take responsibility; Involve all members in care and work for others; Create opportunities for exchanging views, so that its members can improve their understanding of the world themselves and of one another.	
Student Community Action, Essex University Students Union	To get more students/staff involved in local community, to build links between the uni and community, to focus on Greenstead and other region areas.	To recruit students and staff to volunteer in groups that exist already, to encourage students to start their own initiatives that involve community benefits.
Colchester Community Voluntary Services	Community forum-acts as network for voluntary Centre information centre that provided mapping of voluntary centre. We also provide a volunteer opportunities centre for volunteers. Operate and manage transport scheme and shop mobility scheme.	A printing service, a payroll, a training program. Provide information advice on all subjects pertaining to charitable status and community work Business plan should be completed by July.
Greenshoots (Essex County Council)	To promote quality early years provision to a local partnership of providers.	Providing training & resources for providers

Colne Housing	Jointly fund community development worker residents association at Timber Hill.	Provide affordable housing