

YOUNG PEOPLES QUALITY OF LIFE RESEARCH PROJECT



**Produced by
The Cornforth Partnership
JULY 2008**

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The young people's Quality of Life Research is the first time a young people's research project of this scale has been undertaken within Sedgefield Borough. It builds upon the recent adult Quality of Life research which was completed in July 2007. Both projects were commissioned through the Sedgefield Local Strategic Partnership. The research has been conducted by The Cornforth Partnership and supported through Cornforth Youth Aloud young people's forum.

The information collected provides a 'snap shot' of what it is like for children and young people living in Sedgefield Borough. It will also provide relevant service providers and decision makers with an insight into their experiences as well as an understanding of local needs and requirements.

OBJECTIVES

The principal objective of the research was to collect data from a large sample of children and young people living in the Borough in relation to the following topics:

- **Demographic information** to include, gender, ethnicity, ability, social contact and living arrangements.
- Respondents views on **what it is like to live in their community** to include what facilities they are currently utilising, what facilities they would like to see. Also to look at **community safety** and discover what people/ things make them feel both safe and unsafe, and **what things they would change about their community if they had the opportunity**.
- Respondent's responsibilities regarding **caring for others**, and what if any **voluntary work** young people are currently engaging with.
- Discover who young people **respect** and the reasons why they respect them. Also to discover if young people feel respected at home, at school and in their community.
- To discover what **healthy and unhealthy** activities young people across the Borough are participating with and to see what they feel would help them to lead healthier lifestyles.
- To discover where young people would choose to turn if they needed **support** with either personal issues or issues affecting their communities.

The research within this document has been placed in the order of locality groups, which are the delivery mechanisms for the Sedgefield Local Children's Board. It has been our aim while working on the project to make the information encased within this report as accessible as possible.

METHODOLOGY

The target population for our research was children and young people living in Sedgefield Borough. The youngest participant was 5 years old and the oldest was 19 and a total **of 942 young people** took part in the project.

We gained the information required by conducting a survey using questionnaires and a series of targeted focus groups.

QUESTIONNAIRES

We designed a questionnaire which was distributed to all primary and secondary schools in the Borough and they distributed them to year 6 and year 10 classes. The same format and structure was used in both the primary and secondary schools, however some of the language was modified to make the questions easier for the primary school age children to understand. The primary questionnaires were completed by Year 6 pupils and the secondary questionnaires were completed by Year 10 students. These year groups were chosen because of their relationship to transition; Year 6 would be moving from primary to secondary education and Year 10 were about to enter their final year of secondary education.

The questionnaire was split into the 5 sections above and was designed in a way to allow us to gain both qualitative and quantitative data from a large section of our target population. Another advantage of this method was that it allowed the young people to answer the questions confidentially, thus, encouraging the young people to give a more honest answer if they knew that there was no danger of repercussion or judgement.

FOCUS GROUP

Although we were interested in gaining a sizable and representative data set from across the whole Borough, we also wanted to talk to individual young people to give them a chance to express their opinions and experiences more freely. This is why we decided to conduct a series of focus groups. Our question route followed the same topics as the questionnaires, but we were more flexible within those topics and allowed the young people to go deeper into issues that were pertinent to them, which is why all of the focus groups have a different slant created by the young people themselves.

It was important to us that the harder to reach young people were included in our research, and that those who may not be accessing main stream education still had an opportunity to have their voices heard. We carried out focus groups with young people from:

- The Youth Engagement Service
- DISC Young Carers
- Young Travellers Group
- Young Parents
- The L.A.D.D.E.R. Centre
- West Cornforth (Rural Group)

KEY FINDINGS & EMERGING ISSUES

The following information provides a brief outline of some of the key and emerging issues highlighted by the young people involved in the research:

1. The majority of young people involved in the research said they **liked where they lived** and highlighted being close to friends and family as the main reason. Ferryhill displayed a much smaller majority with only 22 out of the 39 sampled liking where they lived.
2. When questioned around a sense of belonging and how strongly they felt they **belonged to a place**; the most popular answer was England, followed by their town or village, very few identified with Sedgfield Borough.

3. **Places to Go and Things To Do** – Huge numbers identified a lack of places to go and things to do for young people; however there was a marked difference between the perceptions of young people at primary and secondary age. For example 66/108 at primary age thought there was enough to do in Shildon; where as only 6/49 at secondary age. Improving facilities for young people is clearly identified as a way of improving their quality of life.
4. **Community Safety/Fear of Crime** was a major issue for young people for example 96/100 in Spennymoor, 29/31 in Cornforth and 39/39 in Ferryhill all highlighted crime as a major issue. Most young people recorded feeling safe in their communities in daylight; however the majority described feeling unsafe or very unsafe after dark. Fear of adults was the second most popular response around what made them feel unsafe.
5. **High numbers with Caring Responsibilities** – The number of young people who described having caring responsibilities was much higher than anticipated and raised issues around support. Very high numbers in Fishburn (17/21), Spennymoor (41/100) and Shildon (53/108) highlight this.
6. **Respect** – The majority of young people across The Borough stated they felt respected at home and at school; however much lower numbers felt respected in their communities; for example 13/39 in Ferryhill and 58/100 in Spennymoor felt respected.
7. **Health** – A number of issues were highlighted by young people around the health agenda; with regard to smoking, alcohol and drug use; alcohol was the most predominate issue. Large numbers described utilising alcohol where as drug usage was more sporadic.
8. **Access to sports facilities** – Huge numbers of young people reported that access to sporting facilities would assist them to lead a healthier life. This may indicate possible access issues to current facilities and highlight a need for neighbourhood provision
9. **Healthy Eating** – Young people highlighted the need for healthier meals at home and school and suggested healthier food options in vending machines.
10. **Bullying** – This was a major concern to a number of young people and it was highlighted in the focus groups as an issue that seriously impacted on peoples' quality of life.
11. **The Park** – was identified as the most popular facility accessed by most young people. Highlights the importance of community parks and effective play strategy.

COMPARISONS WITH ADULT SURVEY

Although the questions asked in the adult survey were different the themes were the same and comparisons can be made between the data sets and there are some interesting issues raised including the following:

- The majority of respondents were happy or satisfied with where they live. However, Ferryhill proved to be an area where people appeared to be least happy (22/39 sampled in the primary school survey and 61.9% of adults residing in Ferryhill expressing satisfaction with their community, the lowest of all the Towns and villages surveyed).
- Similar results were drawn around a 'sense of belonging' with the majority of adults and young people highlighting England as a place they identify with most strongly and Sedgefield Borough the least.
- The issue of **Community Safety** does impact hugely on both adults and young people. However adults highlight young peoples behaviour as problematic; for example 53.4% described teenagers hanging around the streets as a big problem. This does give some weight to young people identifying not enough places to go and things to do. However, huge

numbers of young people reported fear of crime as being a major concern to them and also identified fear of adults as being something that made them feel unsafe or very unsafe.

- Adults and young people appear to be extremely mistrusting and wary of each other and perhaps highlights the need for intergenerational activities.
- **The respect agenda** also draws some interesting comparisons with 50.9% of adults saying people do not respect each other. Young people also described a lack of respect in communities with comments including 'I am too young' and 'people take advantage of this' and 'Nobody listens'. Young people from Fishburn highlighted 'bad language from adults'.
- **Alcohol** – High numbers of young people using alcohol was identified as an issue in the research and only 14% of adults in the Quality of Life Survey said they never drank alcohol. This indicates that alcohol is a huge cultural issue for the area.
- **31.7%** of adults who had not undertaken moderate exercise in the last 7 days suggested '**lower cost facilities**', '**local sports facilities**' and '**better, cheaper public transport**' as being ideas for improvement. This echoes the access issues raised in the young people's research and suggestions for more sporting facilities and neighbourhood activities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the Young People's Quality of Life research has been a huge task, undertaken with 942 young people from across all 5 locality areas of Sedgefield Borough. By conducting this research we have been able to gain an insight into the issues affecting young people's quality of life at this moment in time. As with all research its relevance diminishes with time, this is why it is important that we act upon the findings now, if we leave it until later the climate may change along with the issues.

Whatever your motivation for reading this report, we trust that you will find the data encased within it to be accessible, understandable and useful, but most of all we hope that you will act upon it, so that we can respond to what young people are saying to us and deliver services that are both relevant and needed.



The Cornforth Partnership would like to thank first and foremost all of the young people who took the time to tell us about their experiences. Without you there would be no research so thank you!

We would also like to thank the following organisations for their support:

Primary Schools

Aycliffe Village Primary School
Bishop Middleham Primary School
Chilton Primary School
Dean Bank Primary School
Ferryhill Station Primary School
Fishburn Primary School
Kirk Merrington Primary School
Middlestonemoor Primary School
North Park Primary School
Ox Close Primary School
Sedgefield Primary School
St. John's Primary School
Sugar Hill Primary School
Thorn Hill Primary School
Timothy Hackworth Primary School
Trimdon Primary School
Tudhoe Primary School
West Cornforth Primary School
Woodham Burn Primary School

Secondary Schools

Ferryhill Business and Enterprise College
Greenfields School Community and Arts College
Sedgefield Community College
Spennymoor Comprehensive School
Sunnydale Community College
Tudhoe Grange Comprehensive School
Woodham Community Technology College

Other

Administration teams at The Cornforth Partnership & Sedgefield Borough Council
DISC Young Carers
L.A.D.D.E.R. Centre
Number 66
Race Equality Council
Sure Start
Durham County Council
Youth Engagement Service