

Portchester
eople

Fareham
*Community
Action*

**Portchester Extended Services
Consortium Public Consultation
And Audit of Need**

**Summary of “Portchester People”
Consultation Report, December 2007**



A 6 Month Project Funded by the Portchester Extended
Services & Children’s Centre Steering Group

 Hampshire
County Council

SureStart

Summary of “Portchester People” Consultation Report

Portchester Extended Services Consortium commissioned Fareham Community Action to carry out a public consultation and needs audit for Portchester that would inform the Extended Services action plan and the Children’s Centre development plan. The focus of the consultation was to gather information about services in Portchester and to determine the communication methods that work best in providing information about services. It also aimed to determine the gaps that exist in the provision of services for families in Portchester. The geographical boundaries of the political wards of Portchester East and Portchester West were used to define the area.

During the summer and autumn of 2007 the author consulted widely using a variety of methods, which involved all sections of the community and included groups that can often be hard to reach. Questionnaires were sent to families, children, and people that work with children in Portchester. Ideas boards invited opinions from the wider community at Portchester Gala. Focus groups and interviews were then used to validate the conclusions and to provide additional opinions about meeting the needs that were identified through the first stage of work.

Reach of consultation

First stage:

- A wide range of statistics from reliable sources was studied to determine the economic and social characteristics of Portchester and to identify the areas most in need.
- Questionnaires were sent to parents through schools, preschools and parent and toddler groups; a total of 633 questionnaires were returned. This represents about a third of the approximately 2000 households in Portchester that have dependent children.

Teachers and children from all the infant, junior and primary schools in Portchester filled in 28 class questionnaires, and a further 4 classes at Portchester Community School (one from each yr group 7-10) returned more detailed questionnaires.

- 13 key people that work with children in Portchester returned an email survey.
- At Portchester Gala 138 comments were received from the wider community about how people prefer to find out about services, and 98 “wishes” for families in Portchester.

Second stage:

- 64 young people aged between 11 and 16 years answered questions asked by youth workers from the Odyssey and Westlands youth groups.
- 3 focus groups were held in local venues involving a total of 18 local parents.
- 7 people that work with families in Portchester were interviewed face to face.

Recommendations Regarding Communication:

When asked if there is a wide range of activities and services for children and families in Portchester, twice as many people said no than said yes. However, half didn't know about specific services that are available.

1. Publish the directory. Hard copies of the Directory should be placed in prominent positions in Portchester (eg Library, Community Centre, etc), on notice boards and in The Portchester Press. The first stage showed that people by far prefer information through their door, but they also do read notice boards & read leaflets. The directory was popular with parents at focus groups, who emphasised the importance of updating it regularly.

2. More websites. Websites were very popular with respondents from the first stage; they want more, but not many know about current community websites such as Hantsfish. The directory should be placed on a website, possibly that of Portchester Community Centre. There is room for improvement with service providers' current sites. Stakeholders are recommended to start up or improve their own websites.

3. Promotion of services. Organisations that provide services for families should be encouraged to promote themselves more effectively and to promote each other's services. People look to schools and health visitors in particular and would like more information from them about non-school/health visitor services.

4. Create an information point. The first stage of the consultation showed that 88% would like one place nearby to go for information for families. Portchester Community Centre was thought to be an ideal location for this and should become known as main information point for Portchester. It should be offered help with funding.

5. Tell young people. Children and young people should be told about more activities verbally by staff & encouraged to pass it on. Children prefer to find out about activities this way, and say that they rarely search for information about them on notice boards or on websites.

6. Reaching the hard to reach. Service providers may have to focus extra effort in areas that have a greater proportion of families that are vulnerable to having higher levels of need in order to inform and motivate people. Economic and social statistics and the knowledge of local professionals indicated that while Portchester as a whole is not deprived, there are roads

that stand out as potentially requiring more attention. Further information about these areas can be found in the full report.

Recommendations Regarding Service Provision:

7. Open a coffee shop in the evening. Young people would benefit from somewhere light and warm that they can drop into in the evening to chat with their friends. The first stage showed that the most common item that people felt was missing in Portchester were somewhere for teenagers to go. The second stage also gave this the greatest priority. The directory contains more activities and services for younger children than there are for older ones. During the youth group questions 64 out of 65 said that there are not enough places in Portchester for 11-18 year olds to go & everyone liked the idea of having a place where they can sit and talk with friends & said that they and their friends would use it. Possible locations include Darcy's coffee shop, the Community Centre café and St Marys' church hall.

8. Support existing youth clubs. Support Odyssey, Westlands & St Mary's youth groups (especially Odyssey's Saturday nights).

9. Improve park provision for older children. This was another popular item. Stakeholders should use their influence to secure more shelters for young people and better lighting in parks and the paths/roads leading to them. People at the focus group for parents of older children said that their children hang around in the precinct because they feel safer there.

10. Greater use of sports facilities. Greater use should be made of existing sports facilities, in particular, those of Portchester Community School & the community centre. Sports facilities were identified as the second most important gap in provision. This was particularly an issue for parents of older children, and older children themselves were keen to do more sports after school and in the holidays, particularly the boys.

11. Increase levels of childcare. Schools & private childcare providers need to work together to provide an overall childcare plan for Portchester. Both stages of the consultation showed that more before & after school care is required & as well as better information about childcare options. Further research is required as need varies greatly between schools. A holiday club at St Mary's could also be pursued. Children said they would like to do more activities after school and in the holidays.

12. More support for parents. Stakeholders (schools & other organisations) should work together to improve awareness of workshops and courses for parents. Existing courses should be opened up to parents of surrounding schools. Results of the first stage showed that over half of pupils would like parents to be able to help more with homework, and nearly 60 % of parents said that they would like more workshops to enable them to do this. Parents at the focus groups said that childcare should be provided & that courses should be free from stigma.

13. Drop in for parents of older children. Parents at a focus group suggested that a regular informal get together over coffee would enable parents of teenagers and pre-teens to share their experiences and provide mutual support. They suggested the Portchester Community Centre cafe as a possible location. Further research would be needed, possibly at next Portchester Community School family forum.

14. Activities for families to do together. Parents and primary aged children were keen to do activities for families. Schools and community organisations could work together to provide these. Suggestions from service providers included dads'n'lads sports activities, mums & daughter pamper sessions and building a carnival float.

15. Integrated services café for parents of under 5s. As part of the new Children's Centre a drop in café could be established at Portchester Community Centre where all the services for parents with small children are available under one roof. This was felt to be important at the focus group of parents with babies; they wanted more organised activities for babies and their carers generally.

16. Tackle intolerance. Although questions about intolerance were not specifically asked, the subject was repeatedly raised in people's responses. In general older people were thought to be intolerant of young people, although there was also mention of thoughtlessness by both groups. It was suggested that this problem could be eased by attempts to increase communication between the generations, for example through history or carnival projects, and by encouraging greater publicity for the positive things that young people do.

17. Encourage parental involvement. Professionals were sceptical about this, saying that parents are not motivated. However, some parents at focus groups said that only those in the "right circles" were invited to become involved and that they were put off from volunteering by tighter security and CRB checks, etc. The questionnaires revealed that the over 90% of

respondents feel that they do not have a say in how services and activities are set up and run. More reassurance may be required to encourage greater participation.

18. Trained workers to engage with families. People that work with families stated that it is the unmotivated and vulnerable people that are most in need of services but are the least able or willing to access them. If resources become available, trained workers should be employed to go into the community to actively engage with parents and young people.

To sum up:

Work together to:

- Promote existing services and activities in Portchester.
- Support existing services and activities.
- Improve services for teenagers.
- Make better use of sports facilities.
- Improve childcare availability.
- Widen access to parent support courses.