

**Case Study: Sheerwater
Community Needs
Assessment**

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Description and summary.

Sheerwater in Woking, has been classified by the 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation as having the most deprived areas in the whole of Surrey, with particular deprivation in health. Community Development support for Sheerwater ended in 2003 with the end of the Single Regeneration Budget funding and many initiatives that were started with and for the community have not continued. As a result of this and the changing community demographics, there are still many issues that need tackling in Sheerwater.

In March 2007, a Community Needs Assessment for Sheerwater was commissioned by Woking Borough Council to clearly identify the needs of the changing Sheerwater community. Surrey Community Action (Surrey CA) was commissioned to carry out this work as the organisation has specialist expertise in Community Development, and bottom-up community action planning. The findings of this Community Needs Assessment will contribute to decisions around service and facility provision, and to the development of the Neighbourhood Management programme in Sheerwater, enabling service providers to be clear of community needs.

641 local residents (which is over 18% of Sheerwater's population), 28 local organisations and 10 Sheerwater based businesses actively took part and had their say on the issues and needs of the local area.

Key players, agencies and organisations

- Sheerwater residents
- Surrey Community Action
- Woking Borough Council
- Woking Association of Voluntary Services
- Sheerwater and Maybury Partnership

Aim

- To increase knowledge of the community's needs for services and facilities, including considering issues of accessibility.

Objectives

- To conduct an inclusive Community Needs Assessment.

Specific Activities

- A Planning for Real® exercise was carried out to engage the community in having their say on the future of the area. It is a process that is community led and so immediately begins the process of building local capacity. It was accessible for the whole community as it did not require confidence to speak out at a meeting or the ability to read and write in English. It was engaging across the age range and ethnic mix of the community, and this was aided by the use of multi-lingual staff and volunteers. The exercise was carried out at 13 events. To supplement this, a range of other methods were employed to ensure all parts of the community were given the opportunity to engage.
- Health Visitors and District Nurses carrying out questionnaires with isolated young families and house bound clients
- Youth questionnaire designed by young people at Broadmere School
- Online questionnaires for residents in English and Urdu
- Specially designed comment-beermats/coasters and suggestion boxes in the Community Centre bar, the local café, the Children's Centre, etc.

Funding

£30,000 from Woking Borough Council for 18 hours of Community Development Work per week for 1 year.

Outcomes

- Better local knowledge of the need of the community
- More empowered and engaged community, willing and able to take local action to meet needs
- Better communication between service providers and the community to ensure better service provision

Benefits to the Community

- Community Action Plan detailing the actions needed to address the needs of the community
- Community Action Group set up to lead on making the action plan a reality by undertaking local community action, and influencing service providers.
- Small pot of seedcorn funding to start up community activities