

## **'Most important to families' Research**

### **Background**

For the second year running, public sector partners including Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council, NHS Lancashire North Clinical Commissioning Group, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, Lancashire Fire and Rescue, Lancashire Constabulary and Lancaster and Morecambe College, have joined together to gather and hear local residents views.

The objectives of the engagement exercise have been to:

- Raise awareness that public services are continuing to work together and with others
- Discuss issues, opportunities and develop solutions together
- Encourage a shift in public thinking, expectation and behaviour to enable local people to consider the role can play not only in shaping their district and its services, but in delivering them too
- Help us to focus and prioritise what matter most to local people

### **Engagement Approach**

The focus of this year's joint engagement exercise has been 'families'. Families are at the heart of our society and it is important that the right services needed to support them are available (be they those caring for an elderly relative, or other dependant, or those with children).

The engagement exercise was preceded by a desk top exercise to establish what information public services already have on current family needs. This included:

- 2008 Place Survey
- 2011 'Living in Lancashire' results
- Lancaster University report on 'Economic Crisis, Need & Voluntary Organisations in the Lancaster District'
- Lancaster District Local Assessment 2012/13 report.

The Take Pride in your Family questionnaire was developed in consultation with partners and distributed and promoted via a variety of communication channels.

The consultation ran from 17 September to 15 October 2012 (4 weeks)

Partners plan to meet in November/December to discuss whether further work should take place to further explore and gain a more in depth understanding of the results eg workshops, focus groups etc.

142 questionnaire respondents have signed up to 'have their say' on public services. 113 of them have registered an interest in being involved in further discussions.

## **Desk Top Research**

The last widespread survey on perceived need was the 2008 Place Survey. Every local authority in the country asked their citizens a series of questions about their perceptions of their area and of local public services. Lancashire County Council annually includes some of these questions in their Living in Lancashire panel questionnaires.

### **2008 Place Survey and 2011 Living in Lancashire Survey**

The Place Survey and Living in Lancashire Survey included two questions:

- *What facilities are the most important in making somewhere a good place to live?*
- *Which facilities most need improving?*

The results show that people in Lancaster respondents think the most important facilities in making somewhere a good place to live are:

- The level of crime
- Clean streets
- Health services
- Affordable decent housing
- Education provision, public transport, parks and open spaces, access to nature and the level of congestion appeared in the top ten.

The most needs improving responses were as follows:

- Road and pavement repairs
- Level of traffic congestion
- Activities for teenagers
- Clean streets
- Job prospects
- The level of crime
- Wage levels and cost of living, affordable decent housing, facilities for young children, shopping facilities and public transport appeared in the top ten.

The Living in Lancashire Survey also included questions on:

- *Which community services or facilities are the most important to have in a local area?*
- *Which do they have and which have they used in the last 12 months?*
- *Which three or four of the following services should be the highest priorities for spending in the coming years?*
- *Which three or four of the following services should be the lowest priorities for spending in the coming years?*

The top five community services or facilities that are most important for a local area include:

- 1) A GP
- 2) Post office
- 3) Chemist/pharmacy
- 4) Corner shop

## 5) Bus stop

A bank/cash point, a dentist, school (primary, secondary, special) and play ground also appeared in the top ten. People have most of these in their local area and have used them in the 12 months.

The top five county council services which should be the highest priorities for spending in the coming years include services for older people, primary and secondary education, repairing roads and bridges, keeping local bus services running, traffic management, support for businesses and attracting investment to Lancashire and waste management.

The top five county council services which should be the lowest priorities for spending in the coming years include museums, county parks, open spaces and picnic sites, libraries, adult education, nursery education, welfare rights and trading standards.

2012 results will be available for these questions in January 2013 (Living in Lancashire Survey).

## **Economic Crisis, Need and Voluntary Organisation in the Lancaster District Report**

This report was produced by Lancaster University on behalf of Lancaster District CVS.

- The report recognised that the income poorest families, particularly those with children would be affected by the cuts the most.
- It suggested that the demand for voluntary sector services has increased during the economic crisis and recognised that the districts ageing population contributes to this.
- The need for advice and on social welfare benefits and services was highlighted as particularly high, especially housing needs eg benefit entitlement calculations.
- A concerning finding was the 'inability to access adequate amounts of food is problematic in the Lancaster District due to changing benefit entitlements, the economic crisis and austerity measures.'
- Mental health issues, food advice and advocacy and housing were the key issues raised by the research interviews.

## **Lancaster District Local Assessment 2012/13 Report**

The report identifies a number of future trends including ageing population, migration, households and housing need, IT and technology, recession, public spending and government cuts, unemployment, household spending, benefits.

Some key trends include:

- Lancaster's above-average population of older people means extra 15,000 people over the age of 65 by 2035.
- Lancaster has experienced low net migration in recent years but figures are rising.
- Growth rates in the Lancaster District are projected to be 26.7% in 2033. To meet this need, it is estimated that over 900 new market and affordable homes are required annually over the next 10 years.

- Advances in technology make many activities easier and cheaper for local people. For example, better value shopping and less unnecessary travel.
- The number of people claiming jobseeker's allowance in the Lancaster District has risen by 200 (7.9%) over the last year and now stands at 2768.
- The Welfare Reform Act (2012) will make a significant change to the welfare and benefits system. Citizens Advice have noted an increase in requests for advice on benefits and tax credits, making it the issue most frequently asked about and accounting for one third of all requests made<sup>i</sup>. Issues around debt are very close behind (31%), with employment (8%), housing (7%) and relationships (5%) the next main concerns.

The report also highlights a number of priority needs that reflect the Lancaster University report including meeting urgent needs (food and shelter), the need for impartial advice and supporting those with a disability (both physical and mental).

### **Take Pride in Your Family Questionnaire Results 2012**

334 responses were received for the Take Pride in Your Family questionnaire - 192 online and 142 paper. These results have been analysed separately whereas the comments and demographics have been included in the overall analysis.

### **Most important public services to families and most needs improving**

#### Top ten most important public services

- 1) A safe district to live in
- 2) Easy access to health services and the support you need
- 3) Good education provision
- 4) Accessible and affordable public transport
- 5) Job opportunities
- 6) A clean district to live in
- 7) Anti social behaviour prevention
- 8) Support for the elderly to live independently
- 9) Affordable decent housing
- 10) Parks and open spaces

Eight of the above options have also been chosen as the top ten services that most need improving, with the exception of 'good education provision' and 'parks and open spaces'.

In addition, 'activities for teenagers' and 'well planned town centres, villages and other areas' have been identified as services that most need improving.

#### The top ten public services most need improving

- 1) Job opportunities
- 2) Accessible and affordable public transport
- 3) Anti social behaviour prevention
- 4) A clean district to live in
- 5) Activities for teenagers.
- 6) Affordable decent housing
- 7) Easy access to health services and support you need
- 8) A safe district to live in

- 9) A well planned town centres, villages and other areas
- 10) Support for elderly people to live independently

## **Representation**

Postcode and demographic analysis suggests that respondents represent a range of Lancaster district resident views including rural, urban, gender, age, ethnicity and disability. However, there has been a low response from under 18 year olds, students, lone parents and the unemployed.

298 of respondents answered the postcode and demographic questions.

Questionnaire responses have been received from people who live across the district, both urban and rural areas. (see attached map)

The response from male (44.5%) and females (55.7%) is a close reflection of the Lancaster district population gender statistics (male 48.3%, female 51.7%).

A wide range of age groups from 18 to 65+ have responded to the questionnaire, however the majority of responses have been received by people aged between 45 and 64 (41.3%) followed by 25 to 44 (33.6%).

The response from ethnic groups has been representative in comparison to the 2001 Lancaster district ethnicity statistics (2011 statistics are currently unavailable).

Approximately a fifth of respondents suffer from a long term physical illness, mental health, health condition or disability.

The majority of respondents are employed and married.

Over a third of respondents have parenting responsibilities and just under a fifth have caring responsibilities.

## **Other Relevant Engagement**

Members may also wish to consider the outcomes of a number of other relevant engagement activities to help to inform their budget decisions.

### Voluntary sector commissioning engagement

Engagement sessions took place in Lancaster and Morecambe with a range of voluntary sector groups (via CVS). The feedback on needs was similar to the Lancaster University report (refer to desk top research section). Other identified needs included housing, employment and transport.

'Benefits/jobseekers restructure has impacts in different areas, especially disability and families.'

The feedback on voluntary sector needs and how together we can work differently have been fed into the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework.

### Pupil Power

The Local Democracy week Pupil Power event involved 98 children aged 10 - 12 from 3 primary schools across the district.

The overall results of the Pupil Power game and the individual activity suggested that community safety is the most important service and that public toilets are the least important service.

### Special Council

This year's Special Council event involved 36 young people aged 15 to 19 from 11 schools and colleges from across the district. The event involved a political speed dating activity followed by the Pupil Power game.

The overall results of the Pupil Power game suggested that community safety is the most important service and dog wardens are the least important service.

### **Conclusion**

The desk top research, take pride in your family questionnaire and pupil power results suggest that the most important public services for the Lancaster district are:

- Safety
- Health
- Education
- Transport
- Employment
- Clean streets/district.

The consultation also suggests that the areas that most need improving include:

- Job opportunities
- Transport (in particular, the local bus service)
- Anti social behaviour prevention
- Clean streets/district
- Activities for teenagers

