



WHITEHEAD COMMUNITY SURVEY

Janice Cherry
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INTRODUCTION

Carrickfergus Community Forum secured a post for a community development officer in June 2009. The Forum decided that it would try to reach areas within the Borough that had little or no community participation. Whitehead was identified as a priority area.

A community audit was carried out over a 10 week period. During this time five hundred surveys were delivered throughout the Whitehead area, to the local primary schools, brighter whitehead group and churches, handed out door to door and at focus groups.

The purpose of the research was to establish what the key issues are for the community of Whitehead. The aim of the primary research is to create an up to date profile of the area both in terms of the residents and their needs.

This report aims to make recommendations towards addressing the issues indentified and finding a way forward for the residents of the Whitehead area .

This piece of research was carried out independently without any preconceived ideas or bias and a combination of both primary and secondary research methods were used.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

- ✚ Research the Whitehead Area
- ✚ Create an up to date area profile of the residents of Whitehead.
- ✚ Identify the main issues affecting the residents of Whitehead
- ✚ Make recommendations towards how these issues can be addressed

We wish to thank those individuals who completed surveys, attended focus groups and were interviewed. Carrickfergus Community Forum wishes to recognise the voluntary efforts of the many people working for the good of Whitehead.

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

Whitehead is a small Edwardian seaside town with commanding views of Belfast Lough and the Irish Sea. The pretty seaside village lies on the east coast of County Antrim, Northern Ireland and is fairly self sufficient in terms of businesses and services for daily needs, including shops, schools churches and recreation.

It lies almost midway between the bustling town of Carrickfergus with its mediaeval castle and historic harbour and the busy port of Larne. Located at the base of Muldersleigh Hill, at the entrance to Belfast Lough, on the Irish Sea, it lies in a small bay between the limestone cliffs of Whitehead and the black volcanic cliff of Blackhead, with the Blackhead lighthouse on top, marking the entrance to Belfast Lough.

A Victorian Railway village with a well preserved Conservation area, including the Railway Station, Whitehead contains about 1800 households with over 4,000 people and is home to RPSI (Railway Preservation Society of Ireland) and the CAYC (County Antrim Yacht Club), as well as being the starting point for the popular seaside walk past Sunshine House and around Blackhead Lighthouse.

Whitehead is about 20 miles from Belfast. On the opposite coast of Belfast Lough, to Whitehead, the Copeland Islands, Bangor and part of the County Down coastline, are clearly visible. On a clear day, it is possible to see the Isle of Man and Scotland.

All wards in N.Ireland are ranked from 1 to 582 with one being the most deprived (Shankill in Belfast) and 582 being the least deprived (Hillfoot in Castlereagh).

Whitehead ward is ranked at 513 out of the 582 wards. As a result of these statistics Whitehead is not recognised as being an area of deprivation therefore making it harder to attract deprivation funding.

The 2001 census recorded a resident population of 4067 Whitehead the overall for Carrickfergus was 37658.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research is to create a profile of the residents and resources of the Whitehead area with a view to developing an area action plan.

In order to carry out the research a combination of research method were used.

Research Design

It was considered necessary to conduct both primary and secondary research in the Whitehead area. The reason for this was to enable comparisons of previous research against current up to date first hand information gathered through primary research.

Primary research

A number of different research methods were considered when deciding how to gather information. After careful consideration of the purpose of the research and the amount of time available in which to carry it out and produce a report it was decided that a combination of qualitative and quantitative data should be collected through surveys/questionnaires, focus groups and a series of face to face interviews.

As the Whitehead area is relatively small, it was decided that questionnaires to all households and all resident of the area would be invited to attend focus groups. The participants in the face to face interviews were selected at random from a list of residents in the area.

Secondary Research

In order to gain understanding of the Whitehead area the following resources were used in order to compile the background to Whitehead.

- ✚ Online resources
- ✚ Official statistics
- ✚ NIHE statistics
- ✚ Public records

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Focus Group and interview findings

The researcher held a series of interviews with individuals and groups living within the Whitehead area reported are some of the comments made.

Issues arising from these are detailed below.

Comments from survey sheets

"My daughter is seven years old like a lot of children she gets bored with the park they need activities to do over weekends and holidays. Things like arts and crafts, disco`s and treasurer hunts."

"I think Whitehead needs more facilities for young children i.e. better parks and a cinema."

"I think we need better toilet facilities and cleaner toilets, the promenade needs to be developed further, a new park at bowling area as this is very run down, dog fouling needs to be addressed"

"Better facilities for 12-19 year olds"

"Cleaner footpaths, better Central Park, OAP and youth area"

"Improved transport to Carrickfergus, Ballycarry and Islandagee"

Improvements to blackhead path walk including general maintenance cafe/shop facilities play park etc. Skate park, adventure play area for older children, drop in youth club for older teenagers.

No more house building on remaining green areas

More adult entertainment cinema, restaurants, club with music dancing would like to see facilities more like Carrickfergus or Larne.

Put pedestrian area around community centre and put village green where car park is.

Provide car parking elsewhere to encourage people into town e.g. back of health centre.

Help for shops to improve frontage like Carrickfergus

Organised support for older or disabled people, gardening D.I.Y. and meals on wheels.

Swimming pool for the children or a Jungle gyms type place

Aerobic exercise class

Improvements along promenade, promenade cleaned up and local restaurant

Removal of all dog excrement and their owners

Entire seafront to be refurbished

Neighbourhood watch

A cafe opened beside the local primary school

Neighbourhood police / greater presence of police

More pedestrian road crossings

Shopping complex

A consensus on a number of the surveys was that more facilities were needed for youth, teenagers, and young adults.

Groups operating within Whitehead

Brighter Whitehead

The Town with a population of just over 4000 has entered Ulster in Bloom since 1995 and this is our second opportunity to represent Northern Ireland in Britain in Bloom. Over these 11 years the Brighter Whitehead group has grown from a group of 6 retired gentlemen to over 30 volunteers. The aim of the group from the start was to contribute towards enhancing the town through environmental improvements in association with other community groups, businesses and statutory organisations. With a first year budget of £450 the group has come a long way, today we have our own glasshouses, a branded land rover and over 34 businesses supporting our activities to make Whitehead a place worth living in, visiting and investing in.

Whitehead Community Centre

Whitehead Community Centre was purchased by the residents of Whitehead over 20 years ago, to form a Community Centre which is located in the heart of the Whitehead Conservation Area. It was formerly the Cinema and was decorated in Art Deco style. The centre has recently been refurbished (Winter 2007 / 2008) and has just reopened with excellent accommodation for meetings, etc. The large hall is still available, with a stage and is suitable for dances, sports, sales promotions, pantomimes, public meetings, etc. Up to 230 people can be accommodated (seated) in the main hall. The new accommodation includes an upstairs conference room which can seat 60 people, theatre style, a committee room: and two offices, which can currently be hired out as meeting rooms but which are available for long term rental. There is now a lift (suitable for disabled access) to the upper floor and facilities suitable for use by people with a disability.

The new entrance (where the old garage was formerly located) now includes a small cafe, which can also be used as a meeting room, with an integral kitchen.

The centre rooms can be hired out for various activities, and at present a number of businesses lease the newly build units. Etc Balmoral barbers, Security firm, Tailors Tan`s afterschool club childcare breakfast club, Jo-jingles Education through music, Dance-works, slimming world, yoga class, drama floral art class ,fencing club, ju jitsu and art group.

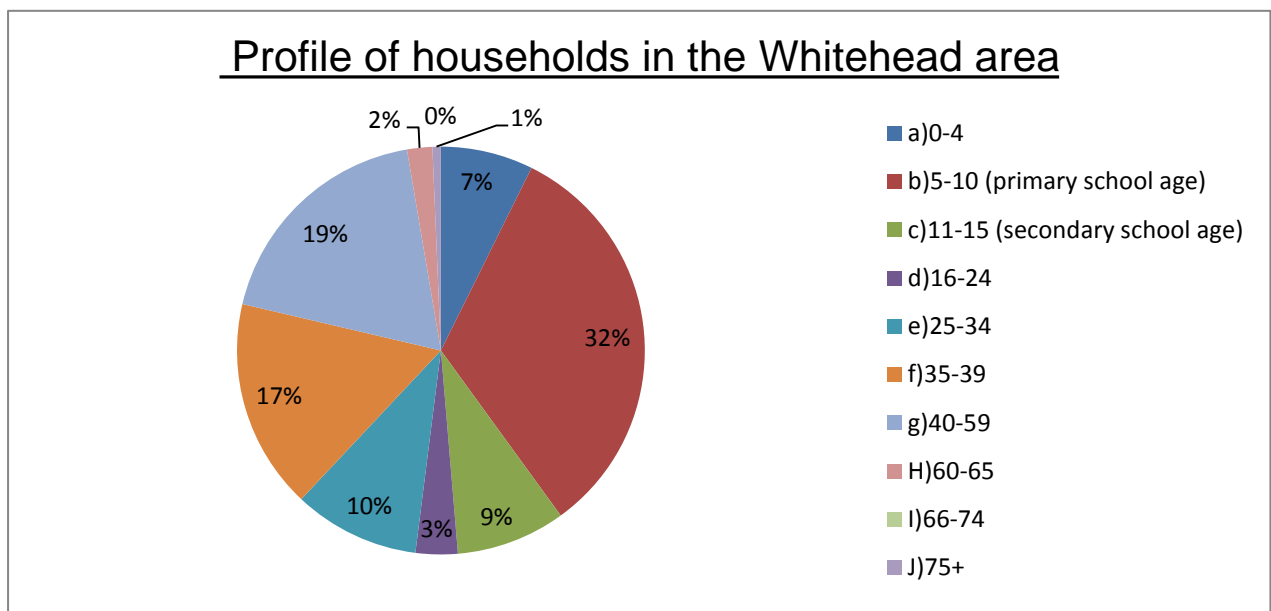
The centre also has two shops let out to local businesses, A Chinese take away and a newsagent shop.

Due to the response of the surveys it was decided by the community support project development officer and forum coordinator to seek a clearer picture of the community involvement in Whitehead, Ransevyn and Windsor estates will be audited individually.

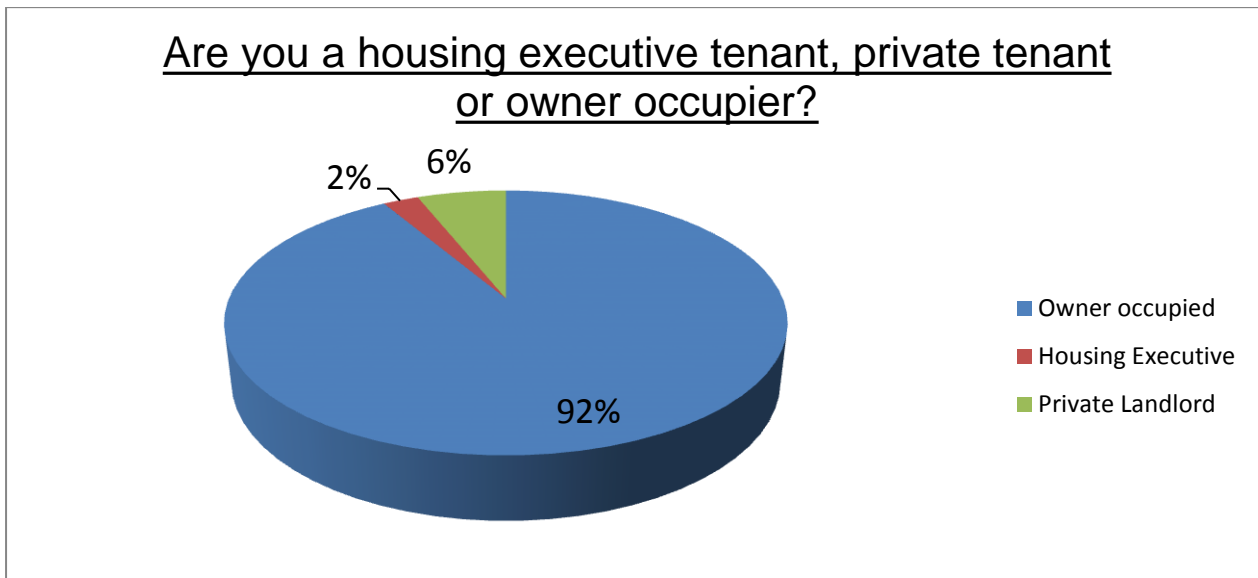
FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

427 questionnaires were distributed to Whitehead primary school 27 to Lourdes primary school and 20 to brighter whitehead group 30 to whitehead community centre a total of 82 were returned, mainly from the Whitehead primary school a total of 16.4%

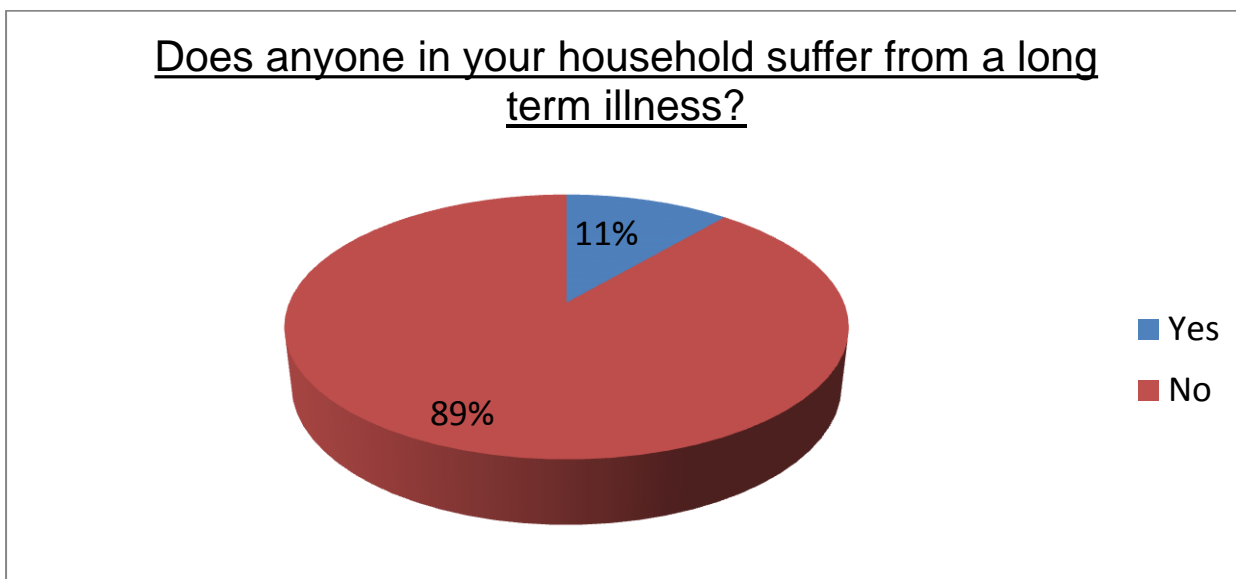
Looking at results of returned surveys Whitehead has a high population of young families living in the area,



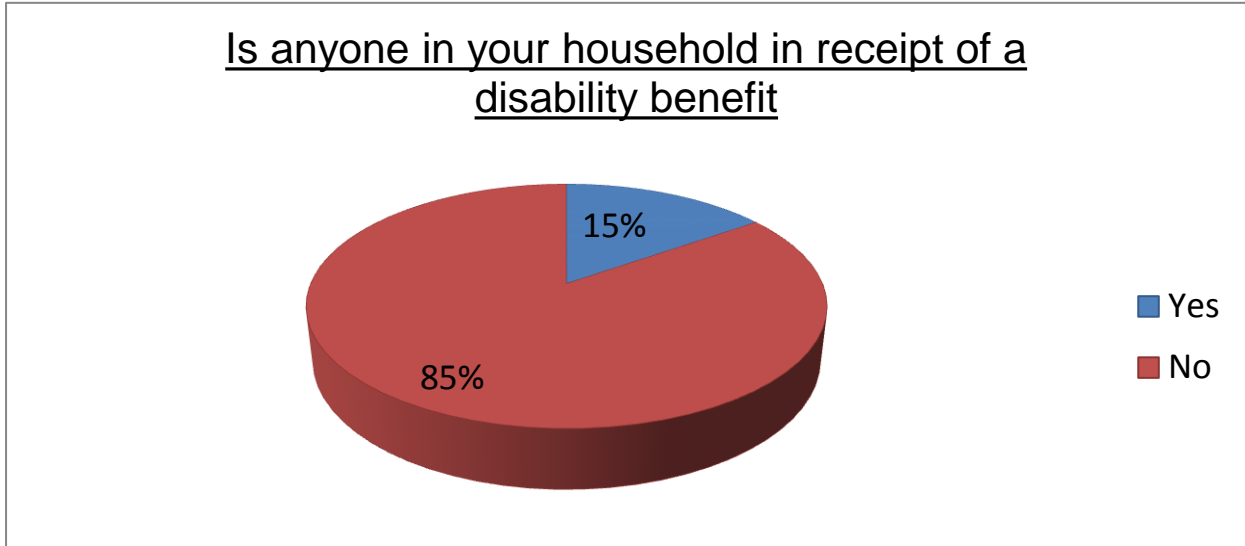
The response for housing would indicate that 92% are owner occupied



11% of the population surveyed suffer from a long term illness.



15% of the population surveyed are in receipt of a disability benefit.



52% of respondents were aware of local groups working on behalf of the community.

52% of the respondents felt the quality of life to be good in the Whitehead Area

60% felt the quality of life staying the same

3% of respondents have plans to moved out of the area in the near future

When asked would they be interested in joining a community resident association 23% said they would be interested in joining a residents association; however, only four supplied their contact details for future work towards this

The main consensus was that 69% of respondents were too busy doing other things.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Carrickfergus Community Forum makes the following recommendations

- Youth provisions to be a Key delivery issues in the Whitehead area
- Youth programmes to be improved
- Play facilities for young people in the area should be improved
- Identify community representatives through local community activists.
- Identify volunteers through existing community and church provisions in the area.
- Build capacity of local groups within area
- Build a partnership between groups operating within Whitehead area.
- Set up and support a networking group
- Intense work to be carried out by Forum`s community development officer in Ransevyn and Windsor estates.

INVENTORY OF FACILITIES IN WHITEHEAD

Churches Whitehead

Anglican St Patrick's Church of Ireland, Rev. Mark Taylor Victoria Avenue, Whitehead



Baptist Whitehead Baptist Church Pastor Mike Ewan and Pastor Stephen Garrett Slaughterford Road, Whitehead



Congregational Whitehead Congregational Church Rev. Dr. V H Ryan Chester Ave., Whitehead



Methodist Whitehead Methodist Church Rev. Tom Deacon Balmoral Avenue, Whitehead

Presbyterian Whitehead Presbyterian Church Rev. Ian Carto Kings Rd., Whitehead

Roman Catholic Our Lady of Lourdes Father Sean Dillon Victoria Avenue, Whitehead



SCHOOLS

Whitehead primary school

3 Islandmagee Road

Whitehead

Bt38 9NE

Lourdes primary school

35 Victoria Avenue

Whitehead

BT38 9QU



Whitehead Community Association

Whitehead community centre

20 Balmoral Avenue

Whitehead

BT38 9QD