



Hertsmere Health Survey

What You Told Us

Summer 2014



Community Action Hertsmere recently undertook research to find out what people living in the borough think and feel about health in Hertsmere in general. Overall 240 people have participated by either completing the on-line survey, paper surveys and 5 focus groups. We have also been able to source recent evaluations from other community projects that we are involved in to add value to this report, such as the Live Well Project, Hertsmere TimeBank and Take Part project as well as consulting with volunteers and members of our CVS.

We asked residents of Hertsmere ‘What do you think is good about where you live?’

The results showed that overall people think and feel Hertsmere is a nice place to live. They are generally content, depending on their personal circumstances and where in the borough they live. Hertsmere presents itself well and has many positive attributes.



We then asked ‘What would make Hertsmere a better place to live?’

At this point people started to talk more about their own personal feeling and views, although some people did have concerns about Hertsmere as a borough and were perhaps better able to communicate their views.

Below are some specific quotes taken from some of the questionnaires:

‘An acceptance that this area is full to capacity: population, roads, social and medical services etc. Cheap social housing is needed, but existing sites and brownfield sites should be used’

‘More street trees would enhance the public wellbeing for the reasons detailed in this research document from the United States: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/22_benefits_208084_7.pdf’

‘Stopping the endless ‘infill’ and building in every possible spot - when all local people express their objections. The resulting traffic jams everywhere and shortage of places in schools/GP surgeries/hospital adds to everyone’s stress levels’

Closing down the bus garage in Potters Bar which makes the road outside the most polluted place in Hertsmere

‘Better access to named/personal GP services.’

A safe access from Smallford Lane and Colney Heath onto the A414, where I am going to lose my life someday, having to cross traffic belting towards me at 50 mph.

The main comments for this question were about affordability to access gyms, exercise and activities. There is a growing concern about the increase in housing and possible lack of increase in service provision such as schools and health care.

We asked 30 children aged 9 and 10 what would they like to see improved to help them and their families be healthier and happier. Cooking classes, seaside trips, camping, fun activities, family activities, helping the poor, help for and ‘a curfew for teenagers’ were the top improvements they identified.



‘Some people need gym etc for recreation, but for other, green belt, green spaces are their exercise spaces and sanity savers – the lungs of the area.’

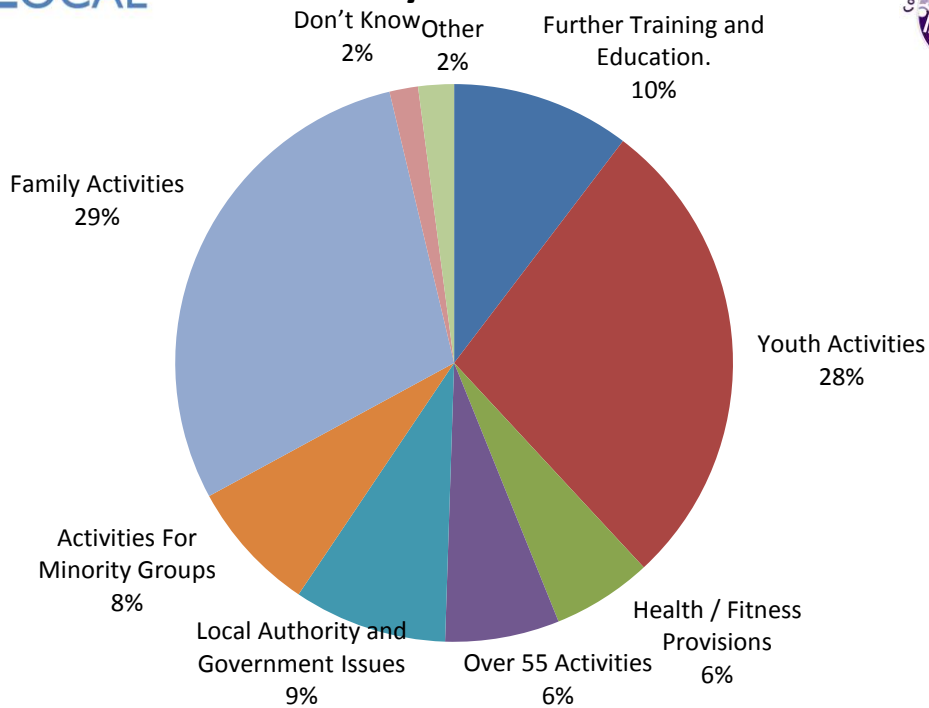
In another 2 focus groups made up of 15 family units and 14 young adults for the same question the findings were:

- Affordability of provision,
- Lack of support for struggling families,
- Lack of awareness of mental health issues,
- Lack of family learning such as cooking and exercise.

The specific issues raised with the young adults were ‘lack of information about drugs, healthy eating and general wellbeing’.

This echoes research undertaken 2 years ago with the ‘Getting People Involved’ project CAH delivered – it should be noted this was in a specific area of Hertsmere mainly the Cowley Hill and Brookmeadow wards. The findings from that research are shown below. This was taken from just under 1500 resident’s feedback in that area.

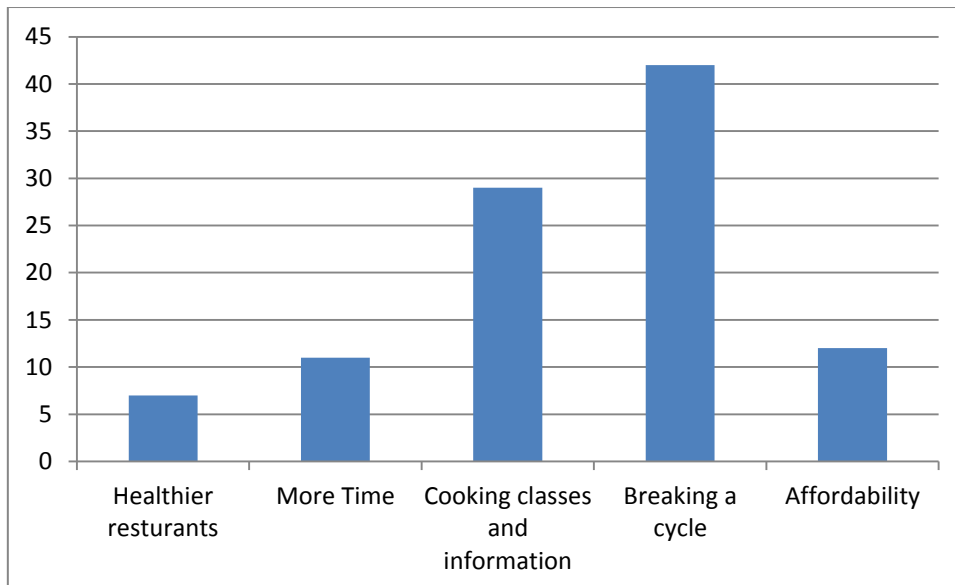
Key Issues



Healthy Eating

We asked residents if they thought they had a healthy diet from the 130 replies, 77% said yes and 23% said no. Yet when we asked *'What would help you to improve your diet'* 75% gave answers.

For the purpose of this survey those answers have been put into the following categories, please note that some people put more than one answer.

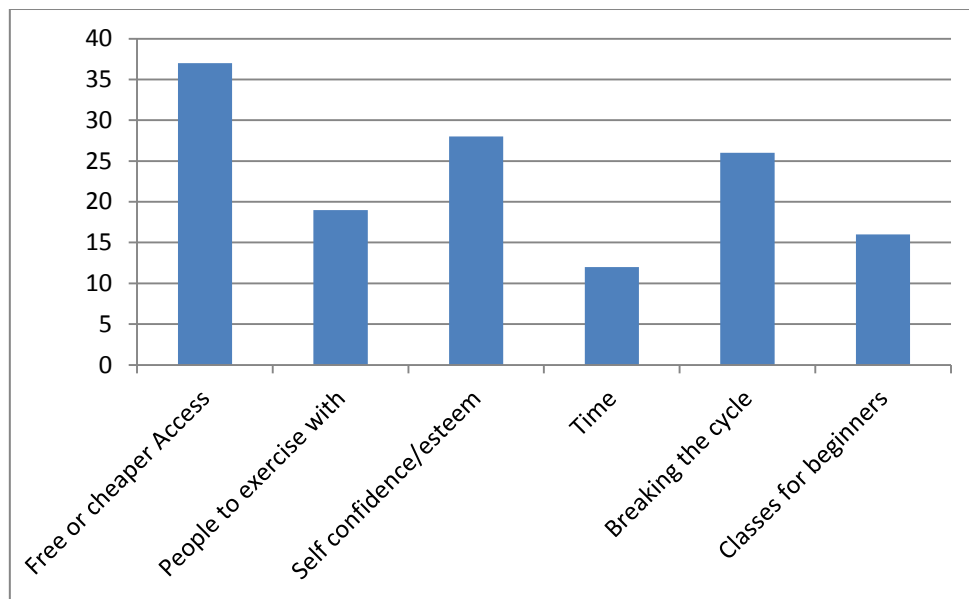


Many people identified for themselves that they have got into 'bad' habits and often choose the 'easy' option, microwave meals, snacks, no set times for meals, eating late at night, skipping

breakfast. It is also clear that people would like to learn more about ‘what’s in the food we eat’, ‘what is a healthy diet’ and ‘how to cook healthier’. It is also a need to improve awareness of how to ‘shop better’. Many people think it is cheaper to buy microwave meals or fast food from take away shops, than it is to cook.

Physical Activity

We asked people if they exercised regularly (30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week). We had 130 replies, 47% said yes and 53% said no. When we asked ‘*What would help you exercise more?*’ we had 73 replies. We have grouped the replies below; some people gave more than one answer.



The surveys and the focus groups highlighted people’s lack of self-esteem and confidence. People do want to improve their lifestyle but lack the motivation to break, the sometimes very unhealthy, lifestyles they are leading. It is also clear that the majority of people taking part in this research are aware that they do want to make changes to improve their own health and wellbeing but need help to do so.

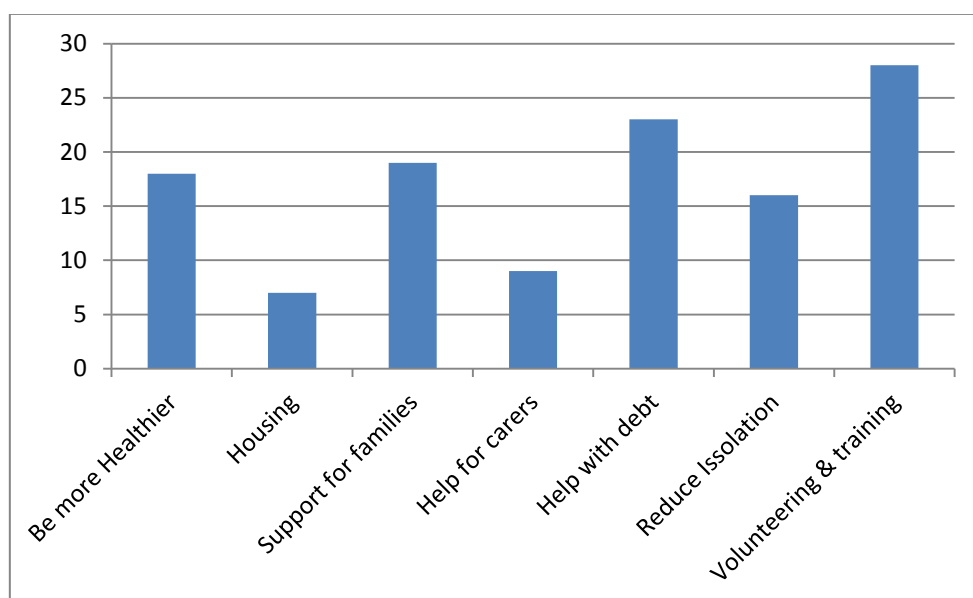
Mental Health and Wellbeing

We asked people if they feel emotionally well and happy. Out of the 130, 73% said yes and 25% said no. When we asked ‘*What would make you feel better, more confident and happy?*’ 65% gave replies.

Within the focus groups people highlighted their lack of motivation and their own personal need to feel like they belong. There are high levels of feelings of isolation across all ages for various reasons including lack of confidence, debt, low self-esteem and increased caring responsibilities. The focus groups all suggested that informal intervention is the first step for engaging people who feel isolated. Volunteering was also highlighted as a positive way of helping people feel better, as well as informal confidence building courses.

Substance misuse (drug and/or alcohol) has been identified as a serious problem in certain areas across the borough. Train and travel links make it easy to access and buy drugs. Class A drugs are cheap and relatively easy to get hold of. Participants of focus groups claim that there are many users of drugs that are not seeking help, but are getting into more and more 'trouble' because of their addiction. When asked why people don't access the services we were told: everybody knows everyone, they didn't feel safe, a lot of the smaller dealers use the services, they had tried but felt judged, the service wasn't supportive, they didn't do what they said they would, they didn't listen. Families reported very little help from statutory services for 'living with people with an addiction'. Access to any provision is hard to find and advice and support seems to be dependent on 'friends'.

'What would make you feel better, more confident and happy?'



Healthy Lifestyles

We asked 130 people if they smoke, 15% said yes and 85% said no. All 15% said they would like help to stop smoking. The help required is group support and one to one outreach sessions.

We asked people if they had a substance misuse problem out of the 130 responses, 7% said yes and 93% said no. Yet when we asked people if they would like help to recover 14% said they would.

We asked 130 people *'What would help you to feel better and become healthier in Hertsmere?'* We gave them a tick box format for this question.

Number of people	What they would like	Number of people	What they would like	Number of people	What they would like
25	<i>Money advice</i>	27	<i>Education / training</i>	25	<i>First Aid</i>
31	<i>Safety advice</i>	56	<i>Using parks and outdoor facilities</i>	48	<i>Physical activities</i>
33	<i>Volunteering</i>	64	<i>Meeting people</i>	39	<i>Keep fit classes</i>
38	<i>Healthy cooking class</i>	41	<i>Adult learning</i>	28	<i>Information</i>
1	<i>Confidence course</i>	57	<i>Community projects</i>	8	<i>Stop smoking sessions</i>

We asked people ‘What other things would they like to see available?’ The findings showed that people want to feel like they belong to their community, they want to improve their health and wellbeing and need more encouragement to do so. Accessibility is a major factor with reasons being highlighted as affordability, childcare, lack of confidence and self-esteem, someone to do it with, suitable classes/support for different levels of ability.

People have also highlighted their needs for improved cycling not just on the roads but within open spaces, safety for cyclist is a concern. Comments have been made with regard to the number of fast food outlets.

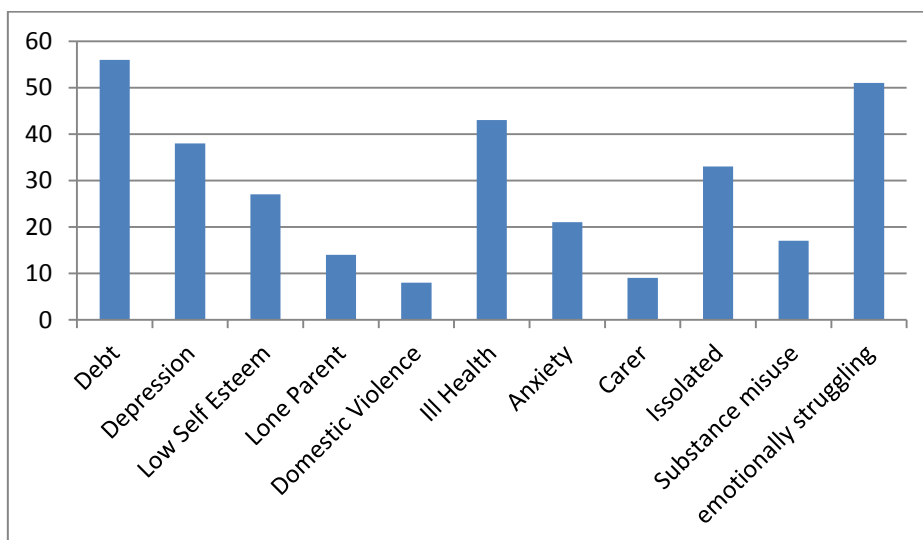
Case Study taken from a current ‘Digital Inclusion Project’ (funding by HCC)

One client has a computer at home but has never been able to use it. She came into the Community Shop and I suggested she looked at the tablet. She had never seen one before and as we chatted she was talking about the time she was evacuated during the war. I explained that the tablet could be used to find information on the area she was sent to. We went onto Google and she found some articles and websites of interest to her. We also showed her how to access You-tube to view some information on songs during that time. She was astonished and really enjoyed the session. She is considering purchasing one once she has had more training. She has also looked at information on websites for health and wellbeing. She is now familiar with how the internet can help her and this will keep her in touch with the wider world as she lives alone.

Families have asked for more to do together, trips, activities, exercise and learning. Adults have asked for DIY classes, home improvement courses and a wide range of leisure learning such as arts and crafts, cake making, card making.

While many people have commented on having good neighbours many have said that they would like to know the people they live closely too. Positive feedback for community projects from participants has shown how strong an impact these projects have for individuals.

We asked 56 people that were accessing help through CAH how they were feeling and if they could explain why they were feeling that way. We have broken down the responses into the categories below



Other

We asked people about 'other things they would like to see improved?' Here are their responses:

- Health walks are an extremely good idea as they help with physical & mental wellbeing (Herts Health Walks deserves support and publicity)
- People seem to be overweight but happy and friendly
- More doctors to get waiting times down. Community hospitals enlarged and expanded
- GP practices are already overstretched, how will they cope with increasing population?
- More agencies should be aware of and interact with the Hertsmere Health and Wellbeing group.
- Would like regular talks from medical people on aspects of wellbeing
- The ceaseless building is changing the community for the worse and adding to people's feeling of hopelessness
- Too many overweight people especially young girls eating junk food
- Promote walking trains
- There is room for great improvement around family support and substance misuse - I do not think the awareness of how deep this problem is in Hertsmere is actually being realised by the statutory services
- Clean streets and well-kept roads and pavements make life for pedestrians much healthier, both emotionally and physically
- The word pain is never mentioned anywhere in your literature, in spite of its common occurrence. Chronic pain, which has not responded to treatment, is progressive illness and needs the same sort of multidisciplinary care as others e.g. diabetes, heart disease etc. It does not get it throughout the UK, throughout the EU, in spite of the research on the huge economic costs and personal suffering. Please make Hertsmere a leader in improving education and understanding of the condition for professionals and treatment for sufferers
- Doctors are hard to get to see and it makes you feel guilty when you try and make an appointment
- I think about older people living on their own and how lonely they must be
- Contented and well-disposed neighbours improve community whining does not improve anything do something about it
- More old people shops. More lunch clubs in north Borehamwood
- I get depressed and need motivating
- More support for children over age 5
- I see growing numbers of obese people in Hertsmere, more help from GPs and confidence building healthy eating classes
- Get vitamins cheaper
- Regular medical check-ups and health visits
- Big local action plan in north Borehamwood
- I try to keep fit by walking
- Film clubs for children e.g. Films shown for very little entry fee at local community centre at weekends
- Get rid of fast food restaurants
- Hertsmere population is getting bigger and bigger
- Confidence building and support groups
- Free computers - I can't afford one and it's hard to find one I can use free to update my benefits claim
- I can't afford to pay for activities or socialising
- Somewhere to go if you are homeless
- Drugs are a big problem and once you are stuck in it, it is so hard to stop and it destroys lives.

Conclusion

The borough of Hertsmere overall is a nice place to live. As with any borough there are pockets of areas that do have more problems due to deprivation.

People's views regarding housing in Hertsmere is split there are some who want more to be built and those that don't, especially on greenbelt areas. The green spaces across the borough are very important to people. People have also highlighted their need for small community projects such as art and craft for all ages. Bringing people together is becoming more important to individuals as is making neighbourhoods friendlier. There is a rise in concern for older people and support available to them. Many have asked for 'befriending schemes and activities. There are also concerns with regard to the support for families with substance misuse issues, those concerns have been highlighted in the focus groups. Improving education for adults has been identified as a need to help people feel better about themselves. Self- diagnosed depression is also fairly high; this survey did not ask whether those responses that are claiming depression are receiving medical support. There are many reasons why people suffer from feelings of isolation, loneliness and low self-worth as demonstrated above in this report.

Through this survey we have confirmed that people living in Hertsmere are prepared to work together to improve their lifestyle and overall health and wellbeing. They do however need help and support to improve their confidence and empower them to lead healthier lifestyles.