

People Shaping Places:

PRIORY COURT

A report commissioned by Waltham Forest Council.

May 2016



Introduction

Waltham Forest Council commissioned Kaizen and Social Life to carry out four engagement pilot projects in the borough in order to develop a better understanding of how it can engage with residents across the borough in planning and designing new developments.

This summary sets out the activities carried out, key emerging themes and the implications for future community engagement in the Priory Court area.

The research strategy devised to structure this project was mixed in approach and included five different engagement methods - resident interviews, pop-up street focus groups, in-depth interviews with local organisations, a community workshop, and a social network analysis. **In total, approximately 260 people were interviewed for this research.**

This research aimed to:

- Identify the major challenges facing residents and businesses today.
- Better understand how the Priory Court Community Centre is used, who it is currently used by, and what residents would like to see from it in the future to help it reach its full potential.
- Support the Council in setting up structures to involve residents in envisioning the future of the community centre and the neighbourhood in general.
- Facilitate discussions and help understand the relationships between the diverse groups of residents living in the area.

To receive a copy of the full report, please contact Waltham Forest Council at consultation@walthamforest.co.uk.

THE RESEARCH TEAM

This report was written by Social Life with contributions and research by Kaizen and Social Life.

Kaizen is an award-winning social business that specialises in designing and delivering projects in the community sector.

Social Life was established in 2012 by The Young Foundation. All its work is about the relationship between people and places.

For more information visit:
<http://wearekaizen.co.uk>
<http://www.social-life.co/>



Figure 1: Priory Court estate.

Priory Court



Figure 2: Priory Court survey area.

Priory Court Estate is located in the west of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, and is home to a diverse community.

The estate was originally established in 1946, with a residents' association and community centre being established in 1953. However, by the 1980s, the buildings had deteriorated quite significantly and the estate was in decline.

In the late 1990s, in partnership with Circle 33 housing, the estate buildings were heavily refurbished, including new roof coverings and external cladding. Some blocks were also demolished and replaced with houses and bungalows.

As part of the redevelopment and refurbishment at Priory Court, a new community centre was built in 2001. When Circle 33 took over the management of the new community centre, they added a variety of new activities with the goal of developing and facilitating a range of local projects, programmes, and events that would improve the quality of life of all residents on the estate and expand the use of the centre to a wider group of residents in the area.

At the end of 2016, Circle 33 will be handing over management of the community centre to the Waltham Forest Council. The Council is keen to ensure that this is a smooth transition and see this as an opportunity to hear from the community, and include them in developing the plans for how best to improve the community centre and its future offerings.



Figure 3: Priory Court Community Centre.

Key findings

“[If the community centre folds up they [elderly people] won’t have anywhere else to go...it has got to stay!”

-community centre user

“Community centre is not diverse – only get their own people.”

-resident living in the Priory Court area

“There are no activities for young people here – youth can feel the government cuts.”

-young person, resident living in the Priory Court area

“Nothing to do, it’s boring, there’s no activities.”

-young person, resident living in the Priory Court area

Feelings about Priory Court today

1. **There is general satisfaction with the neighbourhood.** The majority of young people and adults interviewed were satisfied with the local area as a place to live. They spoke of the friendliness of people, safety, transport links and diversity of people as key reasons for liking the area.
2. **Generally people feel safe in the area but noted occasional anti-social behaviour.** Some residents complained about youth hanging out in the streets and some did not feel safe in the area at night. The presence of gangs was noted as a problem, but most people interviewed said this had improved and the gangs were moving out of the area.

Feelings about Priory Court Community Centre

3. **The community centre is valued and “makes a difference in people’s lives”, but caters to a small group of residents.** Activities and events at the centre are mainly for over 50s and youth (ages 5 to 14). Residents interviewed said there is a lack of diversity in reach and activities, especially for toddlers, teenagers and young adults. Many people outside of the estate do not realise that the community centre is also a resource for them.
4. **There is fear that the community centre will close.** For many regular users of the community centre, the centre is an integral part of their life. They fear losing the centre, and the important social community it provides. There are concerns that this would isolate especially vulnerable and elderly residents.
5. **The uncertainty about what will happen after the lease with Circle 33 ends is causing distress and concern.** Volunteers and users of the community centre are nervous what a new management team could mean, in terms of their rent, use of the space, and the future of existing groups and activities..
6. **Some residents interviewed view the community centre’s management changeover as an opportunity.** They think it has the potential to bring the community together and create more activities for groups that are currently not involved with the community centre.



Figure 4. Residences around Priory Court estate.



Figure 5: Building on the Priory Court estate.

Challenges facing residents

7. **There are not enough social facilities.** Despite the centrality of the community centre, many residents thought there were not enough social facilities to support community life and bring residents together. Residents felt there were not many places to socialise. They would like there to be more social activities at the Priory Court Community Centre and more community events like street parties and barbecues.
8. **There is a lack of youth facilities.** There were some reports that young people hang out in the streets, causing some residents to feel unsafe, especially at night. There is a feeling that more youth provision and facilities, such as a youth club, apprenticeships and skills building will engage youth positively in the community and keep them from anti-social behaviour.
9. **There are few interactions between residents.** There is a feeling that people do not come to community events and do not integrate with each other. Some residents commented that language and cultural barriers could be part of the reason for this.

Envisioning the future

10. **There is a desire for more involvement.** Many residents interviewed reported that they were interested in taking active part in the development of the community. However, many were unable to participate in further engagement or do voluntary work due to lack of time.
11. **Public areas need more attention.** Rubbish, dog fouling and general uncleanliness were noted as a nuisance for residents.
12. **Residents feel outdoor space is underused and would like more sports and outdoor facilities.** Some noted having more flowers, trees and outdoor facilities such as benches and barbecues could bring the community together and give people something to be proud of. Many, especially young people, would like more sports facilities such as football pitches and an astroturf.
13. **People would like better parking and bus links.** Some residents spoke of the need for more and better parking, whilst others commented that speeding cars and poor zebra crossings made the roads unsafe. Many would like more frequent buses.

"[We want to say the centre is] friendly, educational and welcoming...people come here to get involved...the community takes responsibility for the space."

-Community workshop participants

Social Network Analysis

“There are nice neighbours living around here.”

-resident living in the Priory Court area

“Lack of community participation from the community in community events [is a challenge].”

-resident living in the Priory Court area

“They pulled the community down when they pulled down the flats.”

-resident living in the Priory Court area

Social network analysis (SNA) is a way to uncover and better understand the different relationships between people and organisations living in an area. Finding out from people where they go to for information, who they socialise with, and who they go to for help, reveals valuable information about the way people are communicating with each other and which resources exist locally to support stronger social ties. This research tool can also help to identify which people and/or groups of people are not getting any support or help locally, and how the Council, local organisations and neighbours can collaborate to support them to become better engaged.

The SNA of Priory Court revealed that the majority of residents in the area are only connected to their close circles of family and friends, who either live with them or live outside of the area. Only 15% of survey participants said they speak to other residents to learn about what is happening in the area. The majority of respondents also did not know of any local organisations that offer services in the area.

The Priory Court Community Centre - which is only used by approximately half of those people interviewed - is the only space that brings people together regularly in the area. The community centre is therefore the only social ‘hub’ in Priory Court. If the centre had enhanced services and more diverse offerings it could bring a much broader set of residents into meaningful contact with each other.

If all the relationships in Priory Court were drawn with dots representing people, and lines representing relationships between people, the image would look something like Figure 7. This illustrates how many small groups of people are not connected to other residents in the area. The grey dots are those who do not use the community centre. In contrast, the coloured dots in the middle of the image are individuals involved in the community centre’s different activities. Many of these activity groups have built strong and dense social networks, where members feel comfortable going to each other for support, advice or to socialise with in the area.

The local chemist, the head of the former tenant and resident association, Circle 33, and the leaders of the activity groups were noted as important “connectors” in this network. However, these groups and their members do not seem to be well connected to members of other groups, and are only connected via a shared relationship with the community centre’s management team (Circle 33) and volunteers. This gives the community centre’s staff and volunteers an important role in connecting the various groups of people coming to the centre and ensuring activities are reaching all sections of the community living in the Priory Court area.

What do you think could help strengthen Priory Court’s existing social network?



Figure 6: Kids’ drawings during the community workshop.

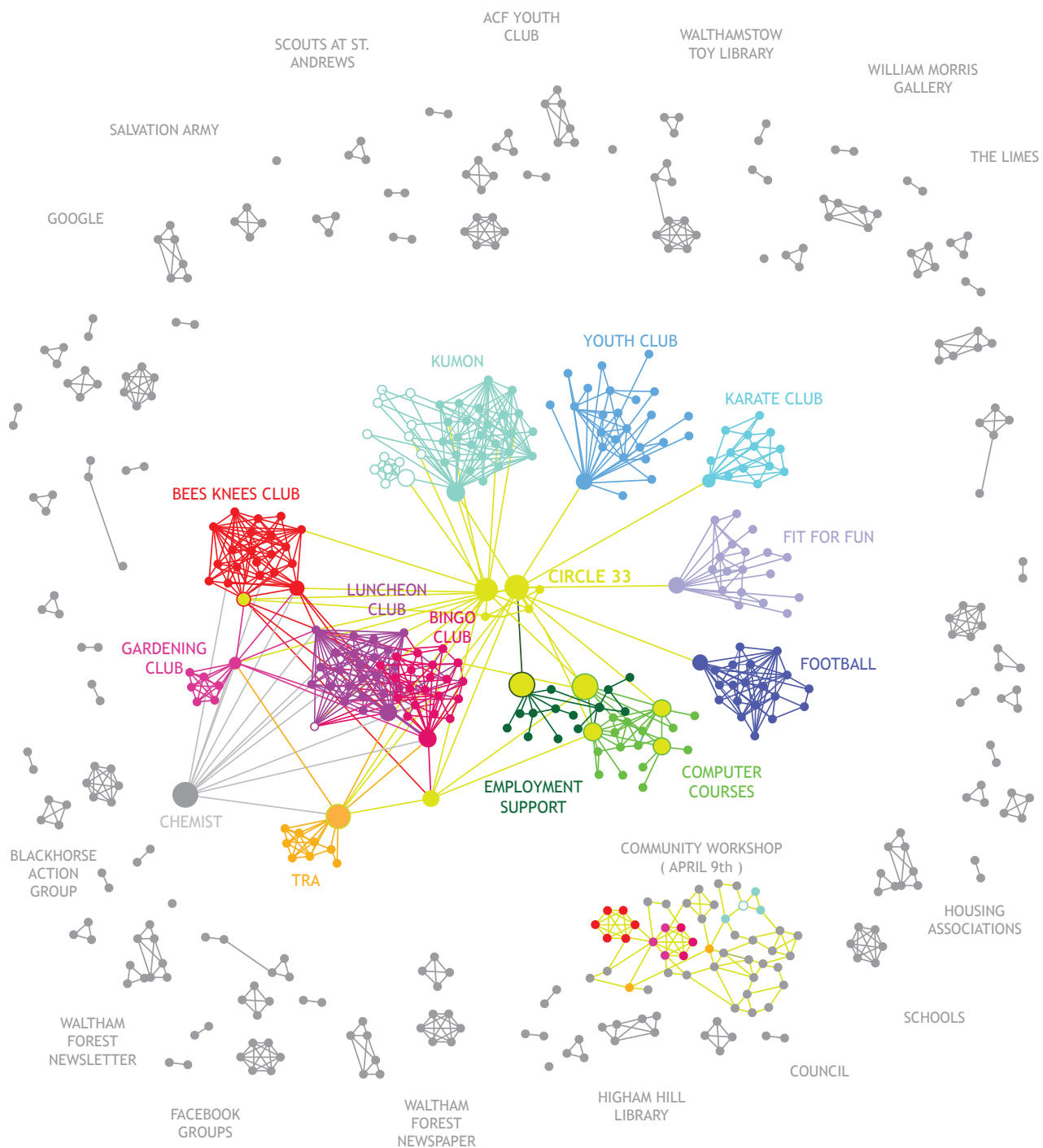
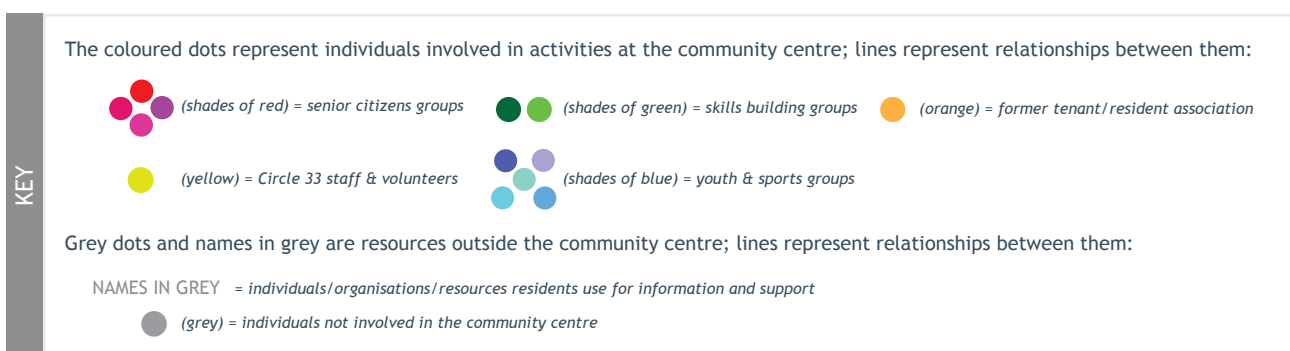


Figure 7: Social networks in the Priory Court area



* This hypothetical visual is based on data from resident surveys, focus groups and conversations with residents. However, it should be interpreted as representation only. It should be noted that this is only a snapshot of the social networks working in the area - based on research in February and March of 2016 - and likely does not include some of the more informal networks operating on the estate and in the surrounding areas. The SNA also does not include some of the programmes on offer at the community centre that are not running in the summer of 2016.

OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

167

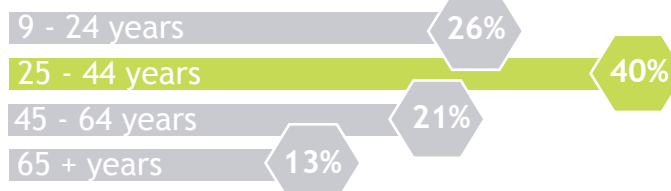
GENDER



ETHNICITY

33%	White British
30%	Black or Black British
16%	Asian or Asian British
11%	Other White
5%	Mixed
2%	Prefer not to say
3%	Other

AGE

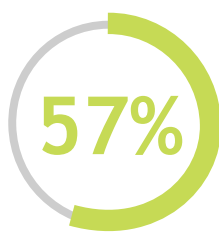


SURVEY RESULTS

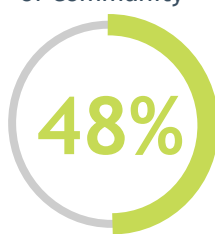
Said views have never been consulted



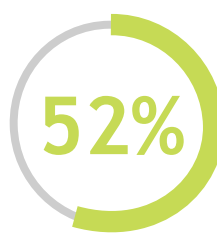
Are satisfied living in the area



Feel there is a strong sense of community



Use the community centre



Believe people have the responsibility to improve their neighbourhood



CONNECTION TO AREA

17%	21+ years
28%	11-20 years
20%	7-10 years
13%	4-6 years
13%	1-3 years
9%	<1 year

VOLUNTEERING IN THE COMMUNITY

41%	Have experience volunteering
32%	Would like to learn about volunteering opportunities

WHY NOT? 60% said lack of time

TENANT/RESIDENT GROUP

26	People interviewed knew of a tenant/resident group
11	People felt the tenant/resident group was representative of ALL residents

SERVICES NEEDED AT A COMMUNITY CENTRE

56%	Youth activities	} MOST CITED
53%	Social activities	
46%	Computers	
41%	Sports activities	
41%	Keep fit classes	
41%	Playgroup	

THINGS WORKING WELL FOR AREA



Friendliness
55%



Diversity
45%



Feels safe
42%



Transport Links
39%



Location
31%

23%	Schools	17%	Parks/Open spaces
21%	Shops	14%	Health provision
20%	Cafes/restaurants/pubs	13%	Cultural facilities
19%	Access to nature	9%	Leisure facilities
19%	Facilities for children	9%	Health services

* Due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to 100%. Some sections like 'things working well for area' and 'preferred method to receive information' allowed residents to select more than one answer. Not all residents responded to each question.