

Quality of Life Indicators - summary of survey of Darnall Action Area October-November 2001

Part of the East End Quality of Life Initiative's brief, as a contribution to the overall aims of the Health Action Zone (HAZ), was to develop locally agreed quality of life indicators. In order to bring about changes in health inequalities, it proposed to build capacity through community research and community profiling, and to develop, monitor and review locally agreed indicators to measure progress. EEQOL has been working closely with the Area Panel which is developing an Area Action Plan. Current government policy encourages local strategic partnerships to select and use locally chosen and developed indicators for measuring the progress of community strategies¹. One of the expected outcomes of the HAZ project was that these indicators would be reported annually².

A survey was carried out during October-November 2001. This was undertaken by locally recruited interviewers and took place in Tinsley and Darnall libraries, local shops and community meetings, in residents' own homes, and at the On Track Fun Day at the Darnall Education Centre (Starworks) on 10 November. 294 questionnaires were also posted out to people who had indicated in previous surveys that they would like to take part in further research.

Only people who lived in the Action Area were invited to take part in the survey. They were presented with 2 lists, one of which was based on previous research carried out in Darnall in February-May 2000³, the other was the government's list of indicators⁴. From each of these lists, people were asked to select up to 10 indicators that they felt should be monitored in order to measure quality of life in the area.

A total of 792 responses were received. The top 10 indicators (in descending order of importance) from each of the lists were:

Local issues:	Government's indicators:
1 Fear of burglary	1 Houses fit to live in
2 Drug-related activities	2 Fear of crime
3 Litter and rubbish dumping	3 Adult education
4 Fear of car theft	4 Crime rate (recorded crime)
5 Disruptive/threatening behaviour by children/youths	5 Qualifications of young people
6 Vandalism	6 Access to key services
7 Lack of safe play areas	7 Air pollution
8 Speeding traffic	8 Homelessness
9 Graffiti	9 Employment (and unemployment) rates
10 Lack of maintenance to public places	10 The amount of household waste collected

¹ DETR's *Preparing Community Strategies: government guidance to local authorities*, December 2000

² HAZ Project Plan, 1999

³ EEQOL's *Darnall Community Research*, August 2000, which used 10 locally recruited interviewers to interview 288 local people about problems that affected their quality of life, and asked for suggestions about how things might be improved.

⁴ DETR's *Local quality of life counts: a handbook for a menu of local indicators of sustainable development*, July 2000

When the figures were weighted to try and reflect more accurately the make-up of the Action Area's population (i.e. age, sex and ethnic group)⁵, the results for the top 10 included 2 Government indicators on waste (amount of waste collected, and amount of waste recycled). It was noticed during the survey that some people misinterpreted the "amount of waste collected" indicator as being a measure of satisfaction with the service, rather than the Government's aim to reduce the amount of waste collected. We have therefore amalgamated the 2 "waste" indicators as, if there were more opportunities for recycling, the overall amount of household waste collected should decrease. The adjusted weighted results, in descending order of importance, were then:

Local issues:	Government's indicators:
1 Litter and rubbish dumping	1 Fear of crime
2 Fear of burglary	2 Crime rate (recorded crime)
3 Vandalism	3 Air pollution
4 Disruptive/threatening behaviour by children/youths	4 Houses fit to live in
5 Drug-related activities	5 The amount of household waste recycled/collected
6 Fear of car theft	6 Qualifications of young people
7 Speeding traffic	7 Access to key services
8 Lack of safe play areas	8 Homelessness
9 Graffiti	9 Public concern over noise
10 Lack of maintenance to public places	10 Adult education

Based on this survey, EEQOL proposes to pilot a questionnaire in the Action Area to establish baseline data for the following indicators:

- access to key services
- travel to work
- travel to school
- public concern over noise
- fear of crime
- community well being
- general satisfaction with the local area.

A face-to-face interview in residents' own homes would be quite costly and labour intensive, but would probably achieve a higher response rate than a postal survey, especially if the questionnaire was quite long. Whilst adequate resources and time are available for EEQOL to undertake a pilot survey, further funding is needed to enable a large-scale representative survey to be undertaken. It is anticipated that community interviewers will revisit those people who have indicated from this survey their willingness to participate in further studies during January-February 2002, so that the data can be analysed before the East End Quality of Life Initiative current funding ends on 31 March 2002.

The full report can be viewed in Darnall and Tinsley libraries, and may be obtained (in print or electronic form) from:

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⁵ It is difficult to establish an exact picture of the "action area" as many statistics are ward based, and some are based on the 1991 census data, the 2001 census data not yet being available, but our sample would appear to be low on younger and older people, men and white ethnic groups.