

# PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN WHITLEY:

IMPROVING CHILDREN'S ATTAINMENT AND PATHWAYS  
TO HIGHER EDUCATION



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Whitley Excellent Cluster (WEC) staff and schools

Whitley parents

John Madejski Academy (JMA)

Young Researchers and new young researchers

Whitley for Real

Whitley Community Development Association

Whitley Researchers

University of Reading

Affinity Housing

Study Higher

This report was prepared by Lorna Zischka and John Ord

Lead researcher: Sally Lloyd-Evans [s.lloyd-evans@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.lloyd-evans@reading.ac.uk)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. PARENTS RESEARCH</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.1 Identifying priorities</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.2 Counteracting stigma</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. WHITLEY FUN DAY REPORT</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4. IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendix - Questionnaires</b>	<b>26</b>



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

In 2017 Reading Borough Council and the University of Reading with the Whitley Community Development Association established a 'Whitley for Real' partnership that aimed to help direct resources and initiatives to more effectively address deprivation locally and with other stakeholders, to stimulate and amplify the 'local voice'.

The programme was funded initially by Reading Borough Council's Housing Services Decent Neighbourhood Fund (DNF) in 2017. The main focus of the programme was to research aspiration in Whitley; the aim being to better understand links between young people's aspirations and school – family – community relationships in order to enhance the life chances of young people.

In 2018 Study Higher joined the Whitley for Real partnership and provided additional financial support from January to December 2018. The on-going support and funding from Study Higher was a significant benefit. This helped to co-produce one of the most intensive neighbourhood-based research projects ever conducted in South Reading with local residents and young people.

The detailed findings of this research can be found in our 'Aspiration in Whitley' report

launched in September 2018 (via Sally Lloyd-Evans at [s.lloyd-evans@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.lloyd-evans@reading.ac.uk))

## 1.2 The 2019 Project

A further successful application to Study Higher enabled support to continue from January to July 2019. The aim of this short-term project was to focus on a parent action group, following up one of the recommendations in our Aspiration report and testing the premise that parental involvement makes a real difference to outcomes. Broadly, the objectives included:

- Establishing a Whitley wide parent's group to develop some understanding of how school-based learning functions locally, including how students learn and what opportunities are offered by higher education.
- Linking a school or schools with the parent's group to explore relationships beyond the more usual methods of contact and communication.
- Engaging with a wide group of parents to consider ideas or projects that are valuable to them in assisting their children's success in life.

This report presents a record, laid out over four sections, of how this 2019 Study Higher project met its aims and objectives:

- *Section 2.1:* Whitley parents both within the Parents Group and beyond it were asked to reflect on the issues of importance that came out of the aspirations research, scoring Whitley's stronger and weaker areas and highlighting priorities for action. This process of reflection was useful both to parents and to those they interact with, building understanding of how the situation is viewed locally and helping those involved to set an appropriate agenda for action.
- *Section 2.2:* It is clear that the way people think about themselves and their circumstances (and how other people 'box' them) has a huge impact on wellbeing, hopes, aspirations and behaviour. It was confirmed by the survey that giving young people and their families a voice, along with new experiences and opportunities with personal support and encouragement were key priorities. In keeping with ongoing

considerations of how to address stigma (what people say about Whitley and how residents feel about themselves), parents were asked to discuss what makes Whitley a good place to be, to reflect on the people and institutions that add to its assets, and to consider what damages its reputation.

- *Section 3:* As one practical action to counteract stigma, the parents group organised a fun day which was held in a local secondary school in early July. Section 3 reports on this day.
- *Section 4:* Finally, two parents – prime movers in the Parent Action Group and in the Fun Day event – agreed to be interviewed to explore in some depth the journey they undertook in organising this community event. The interviews reveal how their involvement has impacted them personally and how it builds into their hopes and plans for the future.

The report ends with summary conclusions and recommendations.





## 2. PARENTS RESEARCH

### 2.1 Identifying priorities

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

43 Whitley parents were invited to reflect on issues of importance identified in the 2018 Aspiration Research. Each of these issues were phrased in the form of a statement about Whitley - for example, 'The communication between school staff and parents is respectful and collaborative,' or 'Our children have positive role models to learn from.' There were 20 statements in total, but they covered the following six areas:

- School-parent collaboration
- Provision of extra-curricular opportunities for children (clubs, trips and confidence building experiences)
- Provision of relational support for children (role models, home environment, support in dealing with life and having a voice)
- Child attitudes (having goals and engaging well with learning)
- Parent relationships (their mutual support networks, having a voice, and the way they talk about the community)
- Preparation of children for adult life (passing on necessary life skills, and guidance in entering the job market or higher education)

Parents were asked to rate how well each of the statements described Whitley on a scale of 1-5. From their responses, comparing one issue to another, it was possible to discover which issues a majority of parents felt Whitley to be weak in. Parents were also asked to highlight the issues they felt to be priorities for action. Less of the parents gave a clear response to this question, although with the

two questions together, along with the opportunity for free comment, some patterns emerged as to the most commonly perceived problems and priorities.

#### 2.1.2 Demographic profile of participant

Only Whitley parents whose children attended (or who once attended) school in the area were invited to take part. The majority of the respondents were women (just over 80%) and predominantly in their thirties and forties, although a few responses were captured from people much younger through to the age of 60 plus. Nearly all of the respondents were long term residents of Whitley: 95% had lived there for more than 5 years, 73% for more than 10 years, and 27% all their life.

Four members of the Parent Action Group took part in the survey as well as the majority of respondents who had no connection with the group. It could be seen that the opinions of the group members were very much in tune with wider parental opinions.

#### 2.1.3 Areas of weakness and priorities for action

This section describes the issues of importance identified in the Aspiration Research. It shows the statements parents had to rate on a scale of one to five (with '1' indicating that people disagree – this is nothing like Whitley, and '5' indicating complete agreement (this is just like Whitley)). The statements were not originally ordered as shown in the table below and there were no headings to describe the broad issues, but for ease of interpretation these headings

have been added and the subjects reordered, starting with the broad area that parents identified Whitley to be the weakest in, and continuing in order of weakness.

Subjects and figures in italics represent

rated particularly poorly (less than three which is the midpoint). The stars indicate the issues parents felt most urgent to address (one star for each parent who indicated this issue as being a priority).

Is Whitley like this?	Average rating on a scale of 1-5 and priority actions starred
1. Preparation of children for adult life (average score 3.06)	
<i>Children are being equipped with all the skills they need for life</i>	2.91
<i>Children have all the support and guidance they need for finding their way into work</i>	2.93
Children have all the support and guidance they need for finding their way into higher education	3.34***
2. Parent relationships (mutual support networks, having a voice, positive talk about the community) (3.10)	
<i>People talk positively about the community instead of being negative</i>	2.98
Parents have a voice. They can influence how things are done in school and in the community	3.09*
Parents have strong support networks with one another	3.24*
3. Provision of extra-curricular opportunities for children (clubs, trips and confidence building experiences) (3.15)	
<i>Suitable after-school or holiday clubs are available for our children</i>	2.88****
Children can access trips and experiences outside of Whitley	3.28****
The clubs available help children to try new things, meet new people and build confidence	3.29*
4. Provision of relational support for children (role models, home environment, counsel, having a voice) (3.23)	
<i>Children are getting the support they need to deal with stress, anxiety &amp; broken relationships</i>	2.90**
Young people have a voice. They can influence how things are done in school and in the community	3.12***
Our children have positive role models to learn from	3.34*
The home environment is safe and constructive for children	3.55*
5. School-parent collaboration (3.28)	
Parents are supportive of school structures	3.14*
Parents understand what their child is learning and how the school system works	3.21
Parents can engage with their child's learning	3.28
Schools respond well to parental concerns	3.33
The communication between school staff and parents is respectful and collaborative	3.44*
6. Children have clear goals and engage with learning (3.47)	
Children are engaging well with learning	3.24
Children, supported by parents, have clear goals in life	3.70



### *1. Preparation of children for adult life*

It can be seen that preparation of Whitley's children for adult life was scored as the broad area of greatest weakness. Life skills need to be passed on and guidance offered as they head into working life. The area in this section receiving the most stars as being priority for action (even though provision was not rated too badly) was seen to be giving young people all the support and guidance they need for finding their way into higher education. Several parents mentioned that they were not sure how much guidance schools were offering on this. One commented that there was "not enough teacher support to enable a child to succeed." Academic achievement and life progress are both influenced by having certain life skills and social support, and so the provision of extra-curricular clubs, activities and confidence building experiences that allow children to find their voice alongside the provision of relational support and counsel for children also feed into this task of equipping children for adult life. These areas of support and opportunity for children also received a lot of stars, indicating that they are priority areas for action.

### *2. Parent relationships*

Parent relationships were rated as Whitley's next weakest issue. The negative way parents talk about the community was rated as particularly weak (with vulnerable parents feeling this worst of all). One parent commented "I am not sure enough people care about the reputation!" Low scores in this area may also be attributed to parents having little voice and influence in their community. The interpersonal support networks between parents scored somewhat more strongly, but not enough to take the overall score out of second to last place. Working against stigma that pulls people down, dampening

expectations such that people feel they cannot change things is one of the key issues that the parent group seeks to address. Later in the same survey (see section 2.2) parents were asked about what makes Whitley a good place to be and the top issue to come out was having friendly and supportive relationships. Creating spaces in which people can connect and be heard improves the way people feel, the way they talk about one another and is empowering for change.

### *3. Provision of extra-curricular opportunities for children (key priority)*

The provision of extra-curricular opportunities for children emerged as the third greatest area of weakness, and particularly the provision of suitable after school clubs. Although people rated the existing clubs, trips and confidence building experiences quite well, they felt that further provision of these was top priority. "Not as many as I would like" was a reoccurring sentiment, and funding was mentioned as being problematic. The lack of trips and experiences outside of Whitley was especially felt by the worst-off respondents. The provision of clubs, trips and confidence building experiences also feed into gaining life-skills in preparation for adult life. Provision in this way got the most stars of all issues, suggesting that this was seen as the topmost priority for action.

### *4. Child relationships (key priority)*

Provision of relational support for children was rated next in weakness, and was also given the second highest priority in terms of how urgently this problem needs to be addressed. A majority (and predominantly the better off people) felt that their children had good role models, and there was general consensus that one's own home environments were fine (although one could not speak for other people's homes). However, parents felt that



the current provision of support to children facing stress, anxiety and broken relationships was an area of particular weakness, and also that more could be done to give young people a voice and influence. Comments were added such as “my home life is not everyone’s” and that whether or not children have good role models “depends on the home”. One commented about children having positive role models, “not at all”. It was acknowledged that “children are vulnerable” and that providing support outside of the home is a “complex issue”, even though support to deal with stress, anxiety and broken relations was seen as both lacking and important to address. A comment was made that even the important issue of giving children a voice should be carried out “with the right guidance”. One-to-one caring and supportive relationships are key. Another said about giving children a voice that “if encouraged, it could help engage them more in lessons etc.”

### **5. School-parent collaboration**

School-parent collaboration was acknowledged to be important, but only the most vulnerable people considered it to be an area of especial weakness in Whitley. One parent commented that parents could engage with the child’s learning, “if you look online”. Regarding the school responding well to parental concerns, comments such as “it depends what about” and “sometimes” were made. A parent might be willing to speak about their own school but not for others. Outside of the most vulnerable, parents rated other parents weaker than school staff when it came to school-parent collaboration. This puts the onus on parents to ensure that they keep engaging with and supporting the school. However, schools may have to go the extra mile in order to help vulnerable parents to trust and engage and to know that their voice is valued. Ensuring that parents feel wanted and have a safe place in

which they can express their views and be heard by the school is key to growing their engagement and support.

### **6. Engagement in learning and setting goals for life**

Children were not seen to be especially weak in their engagement with learning or in terms of having goals for life, and nor was this seen to be an area of priority action. If anything, comments were made about parental and teacher responsibility to support and encourage the children in their care. In other words, parents were looking to adults to take responsibility rather than blaming the children for outcomes. One parent did comment though that “tiredness, poor routines and lack of aspiration” act as drags on learning.

#### **2.1.3.1 Differences in responses according to the demographic of the respondent**

There was no statistically significant difference between the way that men and women responded to the survey, except that women tended to be more susceptible to and/or sensitive to negative talk in the community. Likewise, age made no significant difference, except that younger parents were more likely feel that children did not have clear goals in life. The number of years people had lived in Whitley did not affect any of the responses except that people tended to be more sensitive to negative talk in the community when they had lived there longer. Either the longer people lived there, the more negatively they talked, or, those living in Whitley a long time identified more with the community and were more sensitive to negative talk. Either way, it can be seen that a sense of stigma and its associated negativity grows on a person the longer they are exposed to it.

It was interesting to note how responses differed amongst parents who had had a bad

experience of school themselves, compared to parents with more positive school experiences. We know from the Aspiration Research that parents with negative experiences of school in their own childhood tended to be some of the most financially and socially vulnerable people in the community, and that their children also tended to be doing less well at school than others. Moreover, it could be seen even in this survey that these parents tended to rate living in Whitley significantly less highly than those who had had a good experience – their experiences as children coloured their whole ongoing life experience. Parents with negative experiences of school in their own childhood were significantly:

- More likely to see weaknesses in the area of with communication between school staff and parents;
- Less likely to feel that children had positive role models to learn from;
- Less likely to feel that parents had voice and influence;
- Less likely to feel that children were accessing trips and experiences outside of Whitley;
- More likely to rate negative talk about the community as a problem.

Focussing on these 5 areas may be particularly important in order to support the more vulnerable children.

Parents were asked whether they would like to hear more about the Parent Action Group or get involved themselves. Out of the 36 respondents to this question (a few left it blank), 20 did not want more information, 4 were already involved, 4 were not sure and 8 wanted to find out more. A 22% interest in finding out more bodes positively for the future of the group.

## 2.1.4 Conclusion

Overall, it can be seen that the chief priorities for action picked out had to do with giving children the opportunities and support they need to flourish. Preparation and upskilling for adult life was particularly important, and this could be done via:

- the provision of activities and experiences that give young people the possibility to express themselves and to develop;
- via one-to-one support and counsel in dealing with stress, and
- via personal guidance to children as they plan their future (including support in accessing higher education).

Parental relationships within the community were also identified as an area of severe weakness, and particularly the need to counteract negative talk about one another in the community. There is a need for venues, groups and events that allow people to get to know one another and to build mutually supportive relationships.

Ensuring that the most vulnerable parents (parents with bad experiences of education in their own childhood) can access these networks is particularly important, since these parents are the most affected by stigma and are the most at risk of feeling without voice and influence. They are also the most likely to have difficulties communicating with school staff, which is important to keep working on since parental engagement with schools affects child attitudes. Parent group mediation may be helpful here. They keenly feel the lack of trips and experiences for their children outside of Whitley, and the lack of positive local role models for their children. These are areas in which attention may be directed in order to close the gaps between better off and worse off families.

## 2.2 Counteracting stigma

### 2.2.1 Identifying Whitley strengths

One of the priorities emerging from parental feedback and high in the minds of the parent action group was to counteract stigma by putting forward some of Whitley's more positive sides. 43 Whitley parents (the same parents described in "Identifying priorities," section 2.1) were therefore asked to describe the best things about living in Whitley. They were also asked about the people, institutions and places that make a real contribution, and about the things that particularly damage Whitley's reputation.



#### Question 1: Which public services, community groups or special events make a real contribution to life in Whitley?

Groups who organised events to bring the community together, and who provided support were particularly appreciated. In particular, the recent Funday got 12 mentions (out of 43 respondents). Representatives of the community hub and of the church were most frequently mentioned as groups having made a real contribution to life in Whitley, both as organisers of the Fun Days and as providers of other valued community events and services. Detail:

Number of mentions (out of 43) and groups or events mentioned

12	Fun Day
11	Blank (no response to the question)
9	Community hub and library, along with the café, WCDA and the Parents Group
8	Church organised community events
5	Stated that they do not know of any groups or actions which make a contribution
3	Clubs/ Scouts/ Guides
3	Community gardens/ allotments
3	Child/ baby/ bump related groups
2	Events at school or through school that bring people together
1	One mention each was given to the football club, to the bus service and to the fire service.

#### Question 2: Who do you see as a Whitley-based hero or role model (past or present)? What did they do that you appreciate?

It was harder for people to think of personal heroes/ role models than to think of good groups. 8 persons specifically said that there was no one in Whitley. Another 8 mentioned church leaders and particularly the former vicar, Vernon, who engaged so well with the community. Particular teachers who were kind, supportive and inspirational also got 3 mentions along with some other individuals who showed their good heart for others.

Detail:

Number of mentions (out of 43) and hero or role model mentioned

16	Blank (no response to the question)
8	Stated that there is no one in Whitley
8	Mentioned church leaders, and particularly the former vicar, Vernon, who engaged so well with the community
3	Mentions of particular teachers who were found to be kind, supportive and inspirational
2	Ricky Gervais
2	People running the Community Café, due to their heart for the community
1	One mention each was given to a scout group leader, to the people of South Reading Football club, and to a support worker from Surestart.

**Question 3: What are your favourite places in Whitley? For example, a particular shop, pub, park or home**

Favourite places got a wide range of responses, although the parks (green spaces) were outstanding. Aldi was the most frequently mentioned favourite shop. Detail:

Number of mentions (out of 43) and favourite place mentioned

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 12 | The parks. Particularly Rabsons, but also Cintra (although three concerned comments were made about safety in the parks).   |
| 7  | Blank (no response to the question)   |
| 6  | Aldi  |
| 4  | Home  |
| 4  | Stated there was no good place  |
| 3  | Whitley Community Café  |
| 3  | The library   |
| 3  | The swimming pool and/or sports centre  |
| 3  | World Turned Upside Down (pub and eating place)   |
| 2  | St Agnes church (one mentioning its activities for children)  |
| 2  | Morrisons (one remembering the creche they used to have)  |
| 1  | One mention each given to Green Park (as a nice area to walk), Whitley Park School, the (former) trampoline park, the shops in Reading Gate, Reading Scout HQ, the shop 'Costs' near Morrisons, the fish and chip shop, Trooper Potts, Harmonys Nails, The Salon, the pub, Joe the ice cream man, Turkish Mangal, Ghulam's pharmacy, and Blagdon Nursery. |

**Question 4: What are the best things about living in Whitley (the top one or two things)? and question 5: What is the biggest thing that damages Whitley's reputation?**

The best and worst things about Whitley were both to do with people/relationships. People love the community, friendly neighbours and sense of belonging, but they are distressed by anti-social behaviour (with the anti-social behaviour of teenagers being mentioned as much as everyone else put together). Crime levels were a concern, although thoughtless and uncaring behaviours outside of crime were mentioned even more frequently. Having said

all that, some mentioned an out-of-date negative reputation which still hangs over Whitley. On the positive side, several people also liked the proximity of Whitley to the town centre. Detail:

Number of mentions (out of 43) and best things about Whitley

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 14 | The community feel. The sense of belonging. Having nice/friendly neighbours who look out for each other and know one another. |
| 11 | Blank (no response to the question)   |
| 8  | Close to the town centre. Also to the M4 corridor and to the train station. It is well served with bus routes.                |
| 5  | Stated that there is nothing good.  |
| 5  | Good facilities within Whitley (its green spaces, schools and community events were given specific mentions).                 |
| 2  | Property is cheaper than in other parts of Reading.   |

Number of mentions (out of 43) and the biggest thing that damages Whitley's reputation

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 33 | Antisocial behaviour of individuals, not necessarily involving criminal activity.   |
| 11 | particularly pointed to teenagers and felt intimidated by them.   |
| 10 | mentioned anti-social (but not criminal) ways in which adults behave. Specific mentions were made of neighbours fighting, people with bad attitudes or who were thoughtless/uncaring. |
|    | Confrontational people on benefits got 3 mentions, and beggars and gypsies each got a special mention as well.  |
| 7  | mentioned actual crime  |
| 4  | mentioned a general feeling of vulnerability when they go out.  |
| 3  | mentioned drug related problems.  |
| 3  | mentioned rubbish, graffiti and vandalism.  |
| 2  | mentioned lack of police protection.  |
| 7  | Blank (no response to the question)   |
| 4  | Stigma. The past reputation is out of date but it still hangs over Whitley  |
| 1  | Lack of places to go for young children and the elderly.  |

## 2.2.2 Rating Whitley as a place to live

It is notable that people found it easier to think of negative things to write about Whitley than positive things. Later in the survey, people

were asked to give a rating, on a scale of 1-10, of Whitley as a place to live. The most common response was 5 out of 10, and the mean average rating was 5.84 out of 10.

Detail:

Rating of Whitley as a place to live	Respondents in this category out of 43
1 (very bad)	1
2	3
3	1
4	6
5	9
6	6
7	7
8	6
9	1
10 (very good)	3

It was interesting to note the statistically significant correlations between having rating Whitley as a bad place to live and the ratings parents gave to the various issues listed in the “identifying priorities” section (2.1). In this way, it is possible to see what sort of issues have a particularly negative influence on the way people think about Whitley. In general, people who rated Whitley negatively tended to give lower ratings for everything else as well, but the issues that were particularly associated with people feeling bad about Whitley were:

- Disrespectful communication with the school and lack of parental support for school structures;
- Lack of clubs for children;
- Lack of positive role models;
- Lack of parental voice and influence;
- Negative talking about the community;
- Lack of support for children to find their way into higher education and into work;
- Poor equipping of children with the skills they need for life;

- Lack of support for children when dealing with stress, anxiety and broken relationships.

These could be areas to work on in order to improve the way people feel about Whitley.

The way people feel about Whitley is important as it links to a willingness to engage in action to Whitley’s benefit (a conclusion drawn from the finding that the more positive people were about the community, the more interested they were in hearing more about the Parent Action Group).

### 2.2.3 Conclusion

Counteracting stigma and showcasing Whitley’s more positive sides has an impact on the way people feel about themselves, affecting their capacity to work together, dream dreams and bring about change. For this reason, this study asked people to talk about what makes Whitley a good place to be.

It was found that Whitley’s green spaces are very important to its residents, along with accessibility to services. However above and beyond this, it is relationships between people (whether neighbourly or anti-social) which constitute the make-or-break regarding whether Whitley is a good place to live. People who organise events that bring the community together, along with kind individuals who show personal encouragement and support to others are key in building community. People in the church were most frequently mentioned as having contributed in these ways, but plenty of other organisations were mentioned as well.

It was seen that Whitley residents seek more than the control of anti-social behaviour; the provision of spaces in which people can interact in a constructive way and build neighbourly relations are also important.



### 3. WHITLEY FUN DAY REPORT



#### 3.1. Introduction to the Fun Day

The Whitley Fun Day was held on Saturday 13th July, from 12 noon until 4pm in the grounds of the John Madejski Academy. It was organised by the Parent forum in collaboration with WCDA, Study Higher and the Whitley for Real project. It was a concrete action taken by the parent group towards addressing some of the priorities outlined in previous research. Most especially, it counteracted stigma by providing a creative event that brings the community together and showcases its talent. The event builds on the tradition of the South Reading Churches Fun Day, an annual event usually held at Rabson's Recreation ground but which was not organised this year due to the church regrouping after changes in their leadership.

The day's offer included:

- Live music and local Performing Arts groups, providing free stage entertainment throughout the day;
- Stalls hired by a wide range of local businesses and organisations, each advertising their wares or the clubs they were running in Whitley;
- A recruitment pitch hosted by the army;
- Displays celebrating local history;
- Food and drink;
- Bouncy castles and inflatable slides;
- A reptile tent where people were invited to handle the various animals without charge;
- Cake decorating available to children
- A range of fundraising stalls and activities including face painting, tombola, and 'chuck a wet sponge at a teacher'.

Although there were no entrance fees, funds raised through the stalls were to go towards setting up a new youth café in the South Reading Community Hub. This is planned to open twice a week after school.

The Young Researchers and Whitley Researchers were both asked to gather feedback on the day. A questionnaire was designed by the Young Researchers (with a little fine-tuning at the University of Reading)

to form the basis for interviews, one questionnaire being used for the general public and a slightly modified one for the stall holders. 52 persons (46 members of the public and 6 stallholders) were interviewed for their feedback. The questionnaires used may be found at the end of this report.

## 3.2. Stallholder Feedback

The 6 stall holders interviewed were all local to Whitley and either made up part of the organising team, or were invited by the organising team or found out about the event through Facebook. The stall holders tended to be much more aware of who organised the event and its purpose than members of the public were. Those interviewed included representatives of:

- Dondons sweets: a sweet stall
- JMA CCF (the local cadets' force) whose club activities offer "training, confidence building, leadership, outdoor action and weapons training."
- NC dance: a dance school whose classes contribute to dance and fitness.
- The tombola stall which was run by Whitley café /the parent forum as a fundraising activity for the youth café.
- The bouncy castle attendant, the bouncy castle having been hired by the organisers to add to the day's fun
- Kazoku Karate-do, a local karate club which helps build, "confidence, self-defence and awesomeness"

In part, the clubs and businesses were there for the publicity, but two out of the four also mentioned being motivated by wanting to build the community itself and "offer the community a positive reputation". For all of them, seeing the people come together and mingling with others in the community was mentioned as the highlight of their day.

In terms of improvements, the only two suggestions were more publicity (although by later in the day, the event was packed) and more food stalls. All were positive about coming again.

## 3.3. Feedback from the general public:

### 3.3.1 The profile of those interviewed

- 46 participants at the Fun Day provided their feedback. 40 of these (87%) were from Whitley, and the remaining 6 participants had come from nearby towns or areas of Reading.
- Women were more frequently interviewed than men, with 80% of the respondents being female, and just 20% male. This to some extent may reflect the gender of those attending the event, but may also be biased by the majority gender of the interviewers (women are more likely to interview other women).
- Age:
  - 40% of the respondents were under 18 (the Young Researchers were heavily involved in this research and were clearly efficient in capturing the responses of other young people).
  - 7% were young adults between the age of 18 and 21.
  - 35% of respondents were aged 22-40;
  - 18% were aged 41-65, and
  - No one over the age of 65 was interviewed.
- The vast majority of those interviewed had come with other people, predominantly family. The most common party size was 4 persons (including the interviewee), and the mean average party size was 4.8 persons. One person came with 15 others, all family!
- Overall, 60% attended with other family members, 23% attended only with friends, and 17% attended with a mix of family and

friends. This finding highlights the importance of the social aspect of the event, and the need for it to appeal to a broad range of family and friendship group members.



### 3.3.2 Sources of information

- The most frequently mentioned source of information was word of mouth, mentioned by 36% of respondents. Friends and family featured predominantly as sources, and in 3 instances the name of one of the organisers was specifically mentioned. In a few other cases people mentioned having come because of a children/grandchildren taking part in the programme. Others were themselves involved in part the programme or its organisation and follow-up. It is clear that getting people personally involved or personally invited increases attendance!
- The internet is another important source of information, mentioned by 33% of respondents. Nearly all of these mentioned Facebook as their source, although two mentioned Instagram, one, Snapchat and one, email.
- 27% mentioned having heard about the Fun Day through the school. This was the source of information for almost half of the young people interviewed, and also for their parents. School involvement therefore

appears to have had an important impact on attendance.

### 3.3.3 Understanding

Participants were asked, "who organised this Fun Day and why?" This was a good way to find out how much they knew about the organisation and its aims.

- Most people (65%) did not know. Either they said they didn't know, or they left the response blank.
- A further 19% made a guess and got it wrong. Most of those who got it wrong thought the school organised it (including a couple who thought the Young Researchers organised it). It was also apparent that quite a few people had the church Fun Day in mind and there was some confusion (or sense of continuity, depending on how you want to look at it) between the two events.
- 22% of respondents got the right answer, with half of them citing the names of Lisa, Maria and Tony, and half citing the Parents Forum or WCDA.
- Only a few people had ideas for why the event was organised. One said "because Vernon has left" (this is the vicar who headed up the Church Fun Day). One said "to make school fun" and another "for kids to have fun". Four mentioned raising money for charity or (more specifically) for the young person's café. A couple of people mentioned "to enhance Whitley's offer" and to "Bring community". (One of these said that the event was organised by "good people"!)
- To "raise awareness of local business" was the last reason given.

### 3.3.4 Venue

- Most people (82% of respondents) were very positive about the idea of holding the Fun Day in a school. "Good" and "great idea" were the most frequent comments.

One individual added that it was “good to show off the school,” another said it was “easy to get to,” another, “nice for the community,” and another, “a safe environment.” A couple thought it helped people to hear about it and to bring more or different people in.

- 18% of the respondents said the school venue was “OK” or “alright”.
- No one was negative about the location, with the possible exception of one person who said it was “ok, but like it better in the park”

### 3.3.5 What people hoped to get out of the day

- A fun day out was the most frequently mentioned hope for the day. 56% of respondents mentioned this, and men more frequently than women.
- A further 20% specifically mentioned having come so that their kids could have fun and take part. Women were more likely to mention this than men.
- Besides the entertainment value, 17% mentioned some kind of social aspect (something particularly looked for by women). Meeting up with friends, seeing the community come together, and spending time with family were all mentioned. Two were interested in seeing and supporting the school.
- Finally, 17% mentioned a specific item they were looking for in the day – mostly food, but face paint also got a mention.

### 3.3.6 Personal highlights

Besides being asked what they hoped to get out of the day, people were also asked what they enjoyed the most. They were asked “what’s been your favourite thing?”

- 86% mentioned one or another of the stalls or just the stalls in general. Where particular stalls were mentioned,
  - 35% picked out the animals;
  - 23% the bouncy castle;
  - Henna tattoos, sponge-throwing (at teachers) the lucky wheel (roulette with prizes) and face painting each got two mentions as the best thing.
  - One said it was the karate, one the cake decorating table, and one singled out the food stalls as being the best thing.

Clearly variety was key, and a few people mentioned this specifically as their highlight.

- 22% of respondents rather mentioned social aspects than the stalls. Getting the community together, the atmosphere, and seeing people (especially the children) join in and have fun with all the different activities were all mentioned. Some were impressed with the turnout. The performances added to this social draw, and were mentioned specifically by a couple of people as their highlight.
- Older people were significantly more likely to mention the social aspects of the day than the younger people, young people being more focussed on the stalls. Likewise women were more likely to mention the social aspects than the men.





### 3.3.7 Potential improvements

Participants were asked, "If we did this again, what changes would you like to see? What could be improved? Anything good or bad about the organisation of the day?"

- 65% of those interviewed offered no ideas for improvements – many even stating that it was fine as it was.
  - Men and women, younger and older were equally likely to be happy with things as they were.
- Of the minority who did have some suggestions, most (69%) were ideas for more stalls and an even greater variety of activities and performances.
  - Most people were not specific about exactly what stalls and activities they wanted more of, although more food stalls was the most common specific request, being mentioned 3 times. A beer tent was seen to be good for bringing the dads in.
- Outside of 'more stalls',
  - Cheaper prices were mentioned by two persons.
  - Two wanted more space, (and it was for this reason that the one participant felt that the event would work better in the park.
  - One wanted 'smiles'
- The only direct comment on the organisation of the day was that it was good to have such a variety of people involved.

### 3.3.8 Food

30% of those interviewed had sampled the food at the time of the questionnaire, although this proportion would probably have got larger as the day advanced. Those who had tried the food were then asked if it was good – and what other food they thought should be offered.

- Most participants left this blank.
- Two participants specifically said no other food was needed, and an additional four said that the food they sampled was excellent as it was.
- Five participants said 'maybe' or 'possibly' which I interpret as possible room for improvement, and an additional two specifically requested more variety. Asian food, Italian food and cake/sweet stuff being specifically mentioned.

On balance, it would seem that the food which was on offer was very good, but more could have been added (if only to reduce the queues at peak time). It is worth noting that only one person thought that the food was the 'best thing' even though several had mentioned food as being the thing they were especially hoping to get out of the day. One or two very cheap food options may be appreciated – cost having been mentioned as an issue, and noting that 70% had not sampled any of the food on offer (at least, not at the time of the interview, though by the end more people may have eaten).

### 3.3.9 Would you come back again?

Everybody responded positively to this question, apart from one single, "maybe". The event had clearly been enjoyed.





### 3.4. Conclusions

The Fun Day certainly succeeded in gathering members of Whitley Community together, and feedback on the day was overwhelmingly positive.

Positives:

- Most people were looking for a fun day out and many appreciated the fact that the event was entertaining for their children too.
- A good proportion also valued the fact that the event drew the community together and provided an opportunity to spend time with family and friends.
- A great deal of appreciation was expressed for the various stalls and activities on offer, favourites being the animals and bouncy castle although it was emphasised by many that having a wide variety of entertainments was key to success.
- Positive comments on the atmosphere and 'buzz' were plentiful.

There were relatively few suggestions for improvements – most people were already happy with what they experienced. However, a few potential improvements include:

- Ensuring an even wider variety of entertainments;
- Having more food stalls (more of the same plus, possibly, more variety, including a beer tent and cakes);
- Having a variety of activities and also foods that are free or very low priced;
- Increasing awareness of the charitable aims of the Fun Day. Few knew about this, and the knowledge may have increased people's feel good factor about spending money and taking part.

Attendance:

- People mostly came to the event together with someone else – predominantly with other family members but also with friends, and the expectation of meeting up with friends at the event was important too. The social aspect is important and highlights the need for broad appeal across the demographic spectrum.
- There were more female than male participants at the event. Men, when compared to women, were less likely to cite being attracted by the social aspect of the event, or even by particular things they might get from the stalls. Instead they talked about wanting a fun day out, and this may be the line to take when trying to increase male involvement. Very few men who were interviewed knew who was organising the event or why.
- Getting people personally involved had an impact on attendance. Word of mouth invitation along with Facebook networking were also important sources of information amongst those who came.
- Having multiple schools involved as well as locating the event on JMA premises appeared to have contributed to a high level of attendance amongst young people and their parents, and everyone interviewed was either positive or OK with having the event at the school.
- The elderly were less well represented and may need to be targeted specifically.

There was some overlap between this Fun Day and the Fun Days organised by the church, and it would be interesting to explore to what extent the participants differed due to the organisers having different connections, and whether collaboration (also with the school) would be possible with a view to hosting an even bigger joint event next year (space allowing).

## 4. IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS

### 4.1 Introduction

Two Whitley parents – Mums both - with children currently attending the two local secondary schools and a primary school were prime movers in helping to bring local parents together Whitley wide to establish a parents' forum. They were not new to community activism being closely involved in the Whitley based community development association and with a track record of engaging cooperatively with staff in a local primary school.

Several informal and formative meetings were held in the first half of the Study Higher project. Priorities focused on building local networks, strengthening links with local schools and supporting and informing the parent's survey described in section 2. Plans were progressing slowly but assuredly when a very public 'stigma incident' occurred in early June. The parent of a prospective pupil asked for an opinion about the local secondary school on social media, and this sparked a storm of negative and degrading comments, many of which were made by people outside of Whitley.

To the parents and many others including staff in the 'targeted' local secondary school the 'stigma incident' was shocking – it was also galvanising; it demanded a response. They decided to organise a fun day to put two fingers up to the sneerers and the demonisers and deliver a living demonstration of Whitley's community spirit and its capacity to 'get it together'. The day was scheduled for Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July and was to be held in the grounds of the local secondary school. The two parents – Lisa and Maria - took on the extremely demanding task of organising the event in six short weeks. This was a journey like no other

they had undertaken – from stigma against a community to a community against stigma.

What follows is an account of this journey as outlined by them in audio recorded interviews in September. (The interviews were semi-structured –see Appendix for the schedule – and follow a chronology from stigma incident to post fun day considerations. An account of the fun day itself is presented in section 3.)



### 4.2 Parent interviews

For both parents 'Whitley' means home and family, which are perceived as the fountainheads of a more expansive notion of community. The idea of a wider affinity is evident in places like the community café:

*'The hub and things like the fun day which will bring people together' (L)*

They claimed that the best thing about Whitley was the community spirit, which is currently growing – Whitley is top of the league for community spirit. It was not always like this:

*'There used to be community spirit back in the days when I was younger which has kind of dissipated as I've got older but I can see it coming back now and there's more of a community spirit for my children' (L)*

What's so good about a strong community?

*'Everyone knows everybody. You can walk down the road, you say Hello to somebody and they could be one of the 'troubled ones' and they smile and say Hello'. People have time for other people in Whitley, 'even the kids.' 'As long as you respect them, they respect you back' (M)*

Taking a view to local services in Whitley one parent whose children attended a local primary school and two secondary schools had no issues with the schools – *'The schools are fine. They're great'* (M). The secondary schools *'get a lot of hate'* – put down mostly to the ignorance of what the schools are about. It was clear that both parents had strong and positive relationships with local schools and were closely involved in supporting one of the primary schools which they supported with fund raising activities. And they had constructive contact with the two secondary school Head teachers.

The view was that the local schools do not get enough credit for the work they do and the education they offer – an offer which was regarded as the same as other schools offer. *'It's up to that child, if that child is going to learn. The teachers are there to help but it's not solely the teachers' responsibility.'* (M)

What makes a good school is that the kids themselves need to be motivated and this is helped by communication between parents and teachers. They need to, *'be amicable to each other.'* If they are not the kids pick this up and they can be, *'influenced very easily and especially by their own families'*

Nevertheless, there was a view that schools leave parents out and they don't ask them for suggestions. *'I think that's the big issue'* (M)

*'I want to know what my child is doing. My child is still my child at the end of the day. I*

*don't think they [the schools] let us in as they should do'* (M)

What might help is great after school activities and not only in schools: *'children don't always want to be in the school environment.'* (M) Not enough is on offer for young people however:

*There's nothing, you have to start from scratch there's nothing here for kids. There's a lot for younger children, pre-school age but there's nothing here for secondary school children.* (M)

Both parents felt negative about the local council which in their view had terminated the services young people had relied upon – funds to councils had been cut back and central government bears some responsibility but the local authority was a more immediate agency to take the blame. Even if schools could offer extra-curricular activities parents felt this would be at a prohibitive cost. For young adults services have disappeared or just *'got worse'*. The council has not got the funds and they haven't got the workforce to do what should be done.

Asked about other services to the Whitley community one positive was the bus service for travel backwards and forwards into Reading. However, what's really lacking is the personal support services for young people:

*'I think not just Whitley but across the board mental health services are missing everywhere and this is important to me in Whitley because I live in Whitley and I have children in Whitley'* (L)

Both parents referred to *'the stigma that is attached to Whitley'*. About halfway through the project there occurred a 'stigma incident'. Apparently, a parent had been given a local secondary school as her first choice and innocently inquired via a Facebook forum what the school was like. There was an outpouring of comments – around 211 only 9 of which

were positive about the secondary school. Our parents followed the comments and noted that many were from outside Whitley and included historical comments about how bad the school under a previous name had been.

*'I actually sat back and thought this is undermining me as a parent by choosing this school as a place for my child to go to and I felt quite upset. I felt like I'd failed my child by sending them to a school which had such a bad image' (M)*

*About 200 people are saying that this school's bad and the children are not going to learn. My child goes there, so am I a bad parent for putting my child in that secondary school (L)*

The 'stigma event' caused quite a stir at the community café; it was not just each of our parents but a wider group of friends and associates who were affected.

*'It stirred up a lot of conversations within the café which is when the parents group sat together and said enough's enough, this is what we are going to do and in a moment of madness we decided to have a fun day' (L)*

*'I wanted people to realise that the school is not a prison, the teachers are human. That's why we thought let's just see if we could have a fun day. We wanted to bring the schools to the fun day to showcase what they had to offer. We never expected in a million years the secondary school to say you could have it in our grounds. Thanks to the Head that's what happened' (M)*

The parents had six short weeks to organize the fun day – from a blank start. *I don't know how we done it and we still don't know. It's all a blur to us. We really worked our backsides off' (M)*

The fun day happened on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July from 12.00 to 5.00 in the grounds of a local secondary school. *'This was fantastic to me*

*because the community was walking in to this school and seeing what the school was all about, the community spirit and the buildings some people for the first time' (M)*

*We wanted everyone. We didn't want people to feel they're not welcome. It's wide open and anyone can come. We thought let's make a spectacle of what can be done in Whitley. (L)*

*We had the bands, we had dance groups showcasing their talent, we had stalls people from Whitley showcasing what they make and sell and the Young Researchers doing their part and we had the Whitley museum there so that people can see the old photographs. (L)*



*'We wanted to change people's opinions and show them how great Whitley community is. There was teacher's there getting sponges thrown at them. I even had some thrown at me!' (M)*

*We wanted to show case a different kind of Whitley with local small businesses. There's more to Whitley than it just being a little area, there's so many little businesses. (M)*

For the parents the fun day wildly exceeded expectations. They guessed at the outset that about 400 people might attend – no formal count was made but informally about 2500 to 3000 people attended.

*'I was proud, that was it. I stood outside the school gates a few times and just looking down and into it and seeing the amount of people there; it made me really emotional that we*

*managed to pull something off in six weeks'*  
(M)

It was an event that certainly had some impact – not just on the organizing parents but in their view the wider community. *'It's changed me in myself and also in the community, that there are a lot of people in this community that want things to work here and are really behind the community. It did actually happen, kid's happy, families together, all cultures being there'* (M)

*'It opened up our secondary school. People see it as a prison, as a fortress. It's got high walls, it's got gates that are never open. Obviously it's a school so we need to safeguard the children but the Head said let's open it up and let the people come and see'* (L)

*'The fun day was arranged by a group of parents that just didn't want to sit back and take what the masses were saying, so to speak, so a couple of parents said this is what we are going to do. It only takes a couple of people to stand up and fight and you can change things. It doesn't matter how big or how small if we keep scratching we can change the way people think and that's my ultimate aim'* (L)

Had the fun day helped with the stigma? A stall holder approached one of the parents, *'I never thought you'd be able to pull it off. I know how hard it is'*. The parent responded with: *'I think we're just very determined. We have it in our heads, we are getting it done. I think with success. If somebody tells us we can't do anything we go out and prove them we can. If it's in your mind you can do anything'* M)

Some things have changed locally – they are now building a wider community network, for instance of smaller business organisations in the area. *It's small little branches coming off*

*the trunk and they have grown since the fun day'* (M)

*'Well from the fun day we've had people contacting us asking to work with us on the next event which we never imagined - and there will be a next event'* (L)

People attended the fun day from 'far and wide' across and even beyond Reading. *'People who may have thought 'don't go to Whitley your car will get jacked up and your tyres gone' but they came and nothing has happened and they've had a good day and gone back and said 'yes we were in that school the other day and it was really good'* (L)

*'From the fun day we've had people contacting us asking to work with us on the next event which we never imagined'* (L)

Asked if anything had permanently changed (admittedly after a few short months from the fun day) a parent (M) said *'Yes, what's changed is belief, in myself and also in the community.'*



The parents will use funds generated at the fun day too. *'It wasn't a huge amount of money but it will be put towards a youth café which will be opened within the community hub'* (L)

One parent gave real evidence of some change of attitude; looking at Facebook the night before this interview a grandparent asked for suggestions because her grandson is in primary school Year 6 and she wanted opinions on a local secondary school. *'I thought oh here*



*we go again and another 200 negative comments but there was only a few comments and every one was positive' (M)*

Towards the end of the interviews parents were asked how Study Higher might help in future (they were aware that SH helped fund the fun day). More opportunities for parents was mentioned *'Could mean a variety of things, more opportunities for them (parents) to do with their family, more opportunities for the mum and dad to learn. More chance for learning, going into the schools and finding out what their children are actually learning or actually doing' (M)*. The prospective youth café might also provide new opportunities for learning with young people outside school settings *'I want people to come in and teach without the kids knowing they're being taught – bringing in people for music, children won't think it's learning because it's something they enjoy. That's subtle learning when it's informal they don't realise that they are actually learning. It's fun!' (M)*

And from another parent: *'They could keep funding us! There may be certain things that Study Higher can bring to the table when we open the youth café because we want to do activities for the children – there may be mentoring and we're hoping to do a homework corner' (L)*

Asked if attitudes locally had changed towards going to university? *'In my children's eyes,*

*university is their goal, you reach for. I've always taught my children and I've said to anyone's children you can do whatever you want to do. If you want to go to university you can' (M)*

But a cautionary note was added from this parent: To many people locally, university *'does seem like a million miles away and I think for parent's it's the last thing you want to think about 'cause our children move out. We still want them to be our babies.'* (M) But if you can convince the parents and they realise there's no jobs and let the children learn as long as they can *'and if they can get into university then go to uni' (M)*

Another view *'I don't think back in the day many families aspired for their children going on to university, now I think it's a conversation that takes place around most dinner tables. Other countries take it for granted that their children are going to university but I can sit there and say my child when he left primary school was told he would never go to university. He's now sat there saying this is possibly a thing. This is achievable and he would be the first in my whole family to go to university' (L)*

Finally, from one parent *'Watch this space because there's so much we want to do and it will happen' (M)*

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report describes the progress of the Parents Action Group in Whitley to date. Felt needs in relation to child learning and progress have been explored and prioritised, and the group has risen to the challenge of tackling stigma head-on.



### 5.1 Priorities

The chief priorities picked out for action had to do with giving children the opportunities and support they need to flourish. Preparation and upskilling for adult life were particularly important, and this could be done via:

- The provision of activities and experiences that give young people the possibility to express themselves, explore and to develop;
- One-to-one support and counsel in dealing with stress, and
- Personal guidance to children as they plan their future (including support in accessing higher education).

Vulnerable parents (parents with bad experiences of education in their own childhood) are particularly affected by negative talk in the community and are the most at risk of feeling without voice and influence. This affects their ability to trust and cooperate with others, including school staff. Special efforts to include these groups may be necessary, providing an environment in which they feel safe to join in. Opportunities and role models for their children are particularly important to this group.

Parental relationships within the community were identified as a further area of weakness, and particularly the need to counteract negative talk about one another in the community. Negative talk has a huge knock on effect on how parents (and their children) feel about themselves, about others, and about their ability to affect what happens. Moreover, relationships between people have a big impact on quality of life – on how people feel about living in Whitley.

- People who care about and give into the lives of others make a big difference. These people are our role models, to be recognised and supported.
- There is also a need for venues, groups and events that allow people to get to know one another, building connections and mutually supportive relationships.

### 5.2 Action

The Fun Day was a direct action taken by the Parent Group to address several of the priorities mentioned in this report. It brought together a huge variety of people, showcasing Whitley's schools, talents and assets to counteract stigma and involving young people in new, challenging and enjoyable experiences.

The story of organising the Fun Day as told by the parents who did it highlights the impact that getting involved also has on a person's own life and outlook, and shows that it only takes a few inspired people to make a big difference for everyone.

The proactive response of the parents group to challenge should encourage our other aspiration action groups including the teachers who are now planning further activities for the coming term and the community group who are yet to organise their first event. The Young Researchers and new young researchers at JMA are now planning their extended role in the next Study Higher project.

This report also prepares the ground for our new Study Higher project which will benefit greatly from the greater confidence and experience of the Young Researchers and the initiation of the new young researchers, the stimulation of school participation including teachers and the support shown by local

residents and families in their enthusiastic attendance at the July fun day.

The decision of our two local secondary schools to directly support the fun day with free use of school grounds and providing stall activities will be a major boost to our efforts to engage other secondary schools in the forthcoming Study Higher project.

Our report addressed parental engagement in Whitley and while it highlights what residents and schools might achieve together it also reminds us that this community is marked by huge disadvantage and injurious inequalities. Individual advancement particularly evidenced in aspiration to further and higher education is our aim but not without the general advancement of the wider and other communities. Stronger communities can assert more effectively the need for change and better demand that policy makers and decision makers listen to and act upon the local voice.

# Appendix - Questionnaires

## Parent survey

The following statements reflect areas of importance identified by Whitley parents in recent surveys (Aspiration Research conducted by the Whitley Researchers and the Young Researchers in collaboration with the University of Reading). Now it is important to discover which of these areas you think that action should be focussed on. This is an anonymous survey and your identity will not be put on record or shared.

Please complete this survey only if you can answer 'yes' to the following two questions:

Are you a resident of Whitley?  
(RG2 postcodes North of the M4).

- ☐ No  
☐ Yes

Do you have a child who attends or who once attended school in Whitley?

- ☐ No  
☐ Yes

How well do the following statements describe Whitley? (Choose on a scale of 1-5 with 1=completely disagree (this is nothing like Whitley); and 5=completely agree (this is just like Whitley))

Is Whitley like this?	1=completely disagree 5=completely agree					Put a star next to 1 or 2 issues you feel must be urgently addressed. What exactly is going wrong? What could be done? What outside help might be obtained? <sup>1</sup>
	1	2	3	4	5	
The communication between school staff and parents is respectful and collaborative						
Parents are supportive of school structures						
Schools respond well to parental concerns						
Parents understand what their child is learning and how the school system works						
Parents can engage with their child's learning						
Suitable after-school or holiday clubs are available for our children						
The clubs available help children to try new things, meet new people and build confidence						
Our children have positive role models to learn from						
Young people have a voice. They can influence how things are done in school and in the community						
Parents have a voice. They can influence how things are done in school and in the community						
Children can access trips and experiences outside of Whitley						
Parents have strong support networks with one another						
People talk positively about the community instead of being negative						

<sup>1</sup> e.g. New Directions offers support in adult education; Reading UK CIC is an employer's forum that could provide support with careers information. You may have other contacts and connections.

Children have all the support and guidance they need for finding their way into higher education					
Children have all the support and guidance they need for finding their way into work					
Children, supported by parents, have clear goals in life					
Children are being equipped with all the skills they need for life					
Children are engaging well with learning					
Children are getting the support they need to deal with stress, anxiety & broken relationships					
The home environment is safe and constructive for children					
Other issues of importance					

A **Parent Action Group** has already formed in order to have a say on change, and one of the first things it would like to do is to counteract stigma by showcasing Whitley's more positive sides. In your opinion:

- Which public services, community groups or special events make a real contribution to life in Whitley?
- Who do you see as a Whitley-based hero or role model (past or present)? What did they do that you appreciate?
- What are your favourite places in Whitley? For example, a particular shop, pub, park or home
- What are the *best* things about living in Whitley (the top one or two things)?
- What is the biggest thing that damages Whitley's reputation?

About you (circle responses)

Male / Female / Prefer to self-identify	Age bracket: 18-21; 22-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-59; 60+
Length of time lived in Whitley: All my life; More than 10 years; 6-10 years; 2-5 years; Less than 2 years	

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your *own* experience of secondary school?

1=very bad									10=very good
------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--------------

On a scale of 1-10, what do you think of Whitley as a place to live?

1=very bad									10=very good
------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--------------

Any further comments/reasons for your rating?

Would you like to hear more about the **Parent Action Group** or get involved yourself?

No / Yes / Not sure / Already involved

If yes, please provide us with contact details (please use a separate paper if you wish to keep your survey anonymous)



## WHITLEY FUN DAY – visitor questionnaire



Hello, I am one of the Young Whitley Researchers. We are asking people at the fun day what they think about the event. We don't take your name or address but we will put all the information together to make a report on the day which we will be available for people to read. This will help to make the fun day even better next time.

1. Do you live in Whitley    Yes        No

If No where do you live?

2. How did you find out about the Fun Day?

3. How many people have you come with?

Are they friends or family or both?

4. What do you think about having the fun day in a school?

5. Can you tell us who organised this Fun Day and why?

6. What do you hope to get out of the day?

7. What have you enjoyed most – what's been your favourite thing?

*(show a list of main events for the person to pick their favourites from if they are unsure)*

8. If we did this again what changes would you like to see? What could be improved?

Anything good or bad about the organisation of the day?

9. Have you had some of the food?                      Yes                      No

If yes was it good – what other food do you think should be offered?

10. Would you come back again?

11. About you:        Male    Female                      Prefer not to say

Age band    Under 18,    18 – 21,    22 – 40,    41 – 65,    Over 65

*Thank you for taking part in our survey*

## WHITLEY FUN DAY – Questionnaire for stall holders and event/activity organisers



Hello, I am one of the Young Whitley Researchers. We are asking people at the fun day what they think about the event. We don't take your personal details but we will put all the information together to make a report on the day which we will be available for people to read. This will help to make the fun day even better next time.

**1. Name of stall or event/activity**

(add notes as to what activities, displays or articles are being offered)

**2. Which organisation does this stall or event/activity represent?**

**3. What does this organisation offer that's good for people in Whitley?**

**4. Is the organisation Whitley based?**      Yes      No

If no, where is it based?

**5. How did you find out about the Fun Day?**

**6. Can you tell us who organised this Fun Day and why?**

**7. What do *you* hope to get out of the day?**

**8. What have you enjoyed most?**

**9. If we did this again what changes would you like to see? What could be improved?**

Anything good or bad about the organisation of the day?

**10. Would you come back again?**

*Thank you for taking part in our survey*

## WHITLEY PARENTS In-depth interview - Semi-structured

QUESTIONS and PROMPTS	COMMENT
<p><b>1. Whitley –What does Whitley mean to you</b> - do you like living in Whitley - relationship and background – good and not so good – local role and connections – <b>community and what it means</b> – <b>future hopes</b> and family and children.</p> <p>Best connections and weakest – best and worst public services – other residents, how judged, - <b>what’s missing most for young people</b></p>	
<p><b>2. The ‘stigma’ event</b> –what happened - <b>how did they see it</b> – was it significant or important – <b>how and why</b> – what was damaged – was it anything new – what impact does stigma have – who to and how – <b>what are best remedies</b> – do any really work – <b>what did they decide to do about it</b></p>	
<p><b>3. Planning for the fun day</b> – <b>how and was it challenging</b> – were they nervous about it – if they felt confident how best explained – <b>why was it important to them</b> – who offered help and support – most significant help – <b>What did they want to see happen</b> – why was it important – did they have any doubts and why at JMA</p>	
<p><b>4. The fun day</b> – <b>did it meet expectations</b> – how did they feel about it – best moments – were they surprised – <b>what was its impact</b> – <b>best impact</b> – how do they judge its success – can it be repeated – were any other groups helpful or any not so helpful – is it more <b>possible to build co-operative networks</b> – who with and what for - who and what was missing from the event, if anything.</p> <p>Is there more you can say about the <b>impact of the fun day on young people</b> – what did they contribute and what did they gain – <b>how will this event help Whitley’s young people in future</b></p>	
<p><b>5. Post fun day</b> – <b>has the experience changed you</b> – <b>in what ways, if any</b> – what have you gained (skills) – <b>how has it helped meet stigma</b> – has is changed anything – are the changes, if any, lasting – where do you go from here – what about other parents and relationships with schools and young people – what did you learn from doing this (knowledge) – does the negative reputation still hang over Whitley – <b>what has the community gained</b> – <b>has it made a difference here.</b></p> <p>Our research clearly pointed to <b>parents wanting more opportunities and support for children and young people</b> – <b>in your view what opportunities and what support.</b></p> <p>Did the fun day generate any funds – if so, what plans are there for spending it and what happens next year?</p> <p>Study Higher provided funds to help with the fun day – <b>how can SH or other similar organisations best support you/parents in future.</b> <b>Are you aware of any changes in attitudes about people applying for university</b></p>	