



THEME:
Communities

TITLE OF LEARNING:
Friar Park Millennium Centre Consultation

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can we support our partners to tackle inactivity?
How do we develop opportunities to be active in the community?



AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE:

Located at the heart of one of our Priority Wards, Friar Park Millennium Centre is an essential community organisation that provides a wide range of opportunities for local people including youth services, adult education, bingo and employment and welfare advice.

Active Black Country fund a Satellite Club at the centre and, through this existing arrangement, have learnt about an increasing need to address issues regarding the deteriorating condition of the sports hall. The facility is used for a number of activities, including youth club (3 times per week), gymnastics, dance, football, dodgeball, brownies, cubs, cheerleading and basketball. Given the dearth of alternative community facilities in close proximity, any displacement of activity at this facility has the potential to have severely negative connotations for levels of physical activity in the local area.

To fully understand the importance of the facility to local people, and with a view to developing an evidence base that could contribute to future funding applications for capital improvements, Active Black Country and Friar Park Millennium Centre co-designed and undertook a comprehensive programme of consultation that sought to get under the skin of local attitudes.

WHAT WERE THE LESSONS THAT WERE LEARNT?

Consultation was carried out using 4 methods – a **User Survey** to collect information from people who use the facility on a regular basis; targeted **School Engagement** to understand why the centre is important to local schoolchildren and their families; **Staff and Volunteer Interviews** to capture the thoughts of the people who work at the facility and; a **Consultation Event** to pick up all other voices, including those who don't regularly use the centre.

The exercise demonstrated that the facility is of the highest importance to the local community and there is very little in the way of alternative provision. The consultation clearly identified the need for facility improvements with concerns being raised regarding the sports hall's **flooring, heating and roof** that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The centre manager made it clear that regular bookings have been lost due to the hall flooring being deemed unsafe and not fit-for-purpose. The information provided by a teacher at the nearby Priory Primary School was highly instructive as to the positive role that Friar Park Millennium Centre plays in developing young people in the local area and providing positive messages and role models that give youngsters something to aspire to.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Active Black Country will continue to work with the centre to secure the funding needed to safeguard the sports hall and future use of the facility.