



OUR RESEARCH

Our research team is committed to working together in a friendly and inclusive way where everyone's work is equally valued.

The Whitley Researchers used their personal connections to reach more members of the community. We aim to include the opinions and experiences of all residents, regardless of background and age. Confidentiality and making sure all participants are comfortable with the research is a priority, as well as ensuring that the aims and objectives of the project are clearly explained.

The financial exclusion research is being summarised into a report that will discuss the findings of the project and make recommendations for future development in Whitley. We are also working with Reading Borough Council and local service providers to research other issues that matter to local people.

You can have a look at the final transport report at www.whitley-cda.org where the 'Working Better With Whitley' report is available to everyone on the first page of the site.

For more information about the Big Local partnership, visit www.localtrust.org.uk

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Our community researchers work part-time hours to suit their lives, and are paid the Reading living wage. Training will be provided and no previous experience or formal qualifications are needed, just enthusiasm for working with the community. Volunteers are also welcome.

Whitley Community Café

252 Northumberland Avenue, Reading
please call into the cafe and ask for Mo McSevney
mo.mcsevs@gmail.com

The University of Reading

Contact Sally Lloyd-Evans at s.lloyd-evans@reading.ac.uk

Whitley Community Development Association

Email wcd.a.payroll@gmail.com or call 0118 3740052.



Cover: Original artwork by schools from the Whitley Excellence Cluster (WEC)

WHITLEY RESEARCHERS WORKING BETTER WITH WHITLEY

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OUR PROJECT

In 2012 Whitley, South Reading, secured £1 million Big Local National Lottery Funding for community development over 10 years.

Local residents, community organisations, representatives from the Big Local and the Northumberland Training Academy combined forces with the University of Reading to form a participatory research network called the 'Whitley Researchers'. Participatory research is working with local residents so that projects are run with communities rather than about them.

Our first project focused on transport in Whitley, to make it easier for residents to get out and about. The community research team surveyed and interviewed residents to understand transport problems and encourage discussions. Our research found that many residents had issues getting from one place to another, such as work, school and the hospital. By collaborating with Reading Buses, the research led to the Scarlet 9 bus route being changed in September 2016. This service will enable more residents to travel to the hospital, use local services and improve families' lives.

The group's second project on 'Financial Exclusion' is almost finished, and it explores how local residents' manage money, access advice and learn about financial services. The research will help the Whitley Big Local set up new strategies such as a financial advice service or credit union.



'Having an activity which encourages people to get out of their seats creates a more comfortable dynamic'

Liz, Whitley Researcher

OUR METHODOLOGY

The research methods were designed by the Whitley Researchers, the majority of whom live in Whitley.

The process of creating the questionnaire was just as important as the results, as the creative process empowered the researchers and allowed them to put their newly learnt skills into practice.

For different projects, different methodologies apply. For the transport project, 500 local people were surveyed on their opinions. However, financial exclusion is a more sensitive topic so participants felt more comfortable during one-to-one interviews, which were held in a private environment.

Interviews

Interviews can be a great way of understanding people's experiences and feelings, as they offer a more intimate setting. Participants have more freedom in their responses, and interviewers are able to take into account emotions and body language.

'Take into account the feelings of the person you are interviewing, and any other factors such as religious beliefs'

Sonia, Whitley Researcher

Researchers' Top Interview Tips

- Record the interview, it allows you to pay more attention to your interviewee
- Let the participant speak freely, try not to influence what they might say
- Be ready to adapt your questions during the interview if it isn't going to plan
- Stay on topic – transcribing interviews is very time consuming

Focus Groups

Focus groups can be a great way to start discussions, however it can be difficult to get all participants to join in at first. By using an activity or game, even shy members are encouraged to take part. During the 'Financial Exclusion' project, the Whitley Researchers designed an interactive game in which financial terms were placed along a scale to show participants understanding. This proved to be a successful way of encouraging discussion and involving everyone, as shown in the photo below at the University of Reading.

Remember to take into account the setting of the focus group. Some questions to consider are:

- Did the group members know each other?
- Was the focus group held in a familiar space?
- Did the members know any researchers involved in running the focus group?
- Did everyone get their voices heard?

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are great for gathering lots of information from large group of people. However, they don't allow the participant to go into much depth. Before you start:

- Make sure your questions are clear and that they will give you the information you need
- Pilot or test out your questions!
- Questionnaires can be face-to-face, by post or online. We used face-to-face questionnaires in our transport research as they allowed people to talk.
- Sampling – who, when and where? In total, we surveyed 500 men and women of different ages and ethnicities in schools, community groups, shops, sports centres, and on the doorstep of local streets.