healthwatch Essex

Heart of Pitsea

Resident Survey 2023

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Healthwatch Essex

Healthwatch Essex is an independent charity that gathers and represents views about health and social care services in Essex. Our aim is to influence decision makers so that services are fit for purpose, effective and accessible, ultimately improving service user experience. We also provide an information service to help people access, understand, and navigate the health and social care system.

1.2 Background

In 2012, the Big Lottery Fund announced that an area of the Pitsea community called the 'Heart of Pitsea' was selected for £1 million of investment over a 10-year period as part of their Big Local programme. The programme is overseen by the Basildon, Billericay and Wickford Council for Voluntary Services (BBWCVS).

In 2013, 2017, and 2021, Heart of Pitsea conducted surveys that asked residents what improvements they would like to see in the community. The responses to these questions have helped shape the aims and objectives of the Heart of Pitsea programme. As the 10-year Big Lottery Fund programme came to an end, Heart of Pitsea produced an additional survey of residents. This survey aimed to understand how priorities and key themes within the community have developed over the past 2 years, and to map any positive changes that have occurred since the Heart of Pitsea programme was instated. This survey, released in 2023, contained comparable questions to surveys disseminated in 2017 and 2021.

The 2023 survey was promoted online via the Heart of Pitsea Facebook page and website. Hard copies of the survey were distributed in the local library and community centres. Respondents were also recruited at Heart of Pitsea events, and via pop-ups in the marketplace and Chalvedon shops area. Respondents were offered the opportunity to be entered into a free draw to win one of five £50 cash prizes. The survey was completed by 149 individuals.

1.5 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings and observations carried out on specific dates and times, representing the views of those who contributed anonymously to the Heart of Pitsea Resident Survey 2023. This report analyses the data collected through the survey and identifies themes from the responses.

2.0 Respondent demographics

The Heart of Pitsea Resident Survey 2023 was completed by 149 individuals. The survey's first four questions aimed to capture their demographic data (gender; age group; ethnic background; postcode; and whether they worked or went to school in Pitsea).

As Figure 1 highlights, most respondents (117 or 78.5%) were female. 29 participants or just under one fifth (19.4%) were male. 1 respondent described their gender as 'other', and 2 did not provide a response.

As demonstrated in Figure 2, the most well-represented age groups across the sample were 30-39 (35 respondents or 23.4%), 40-49 (37 or 24.8%), and 65+ (36 or 24.1%). Young people were the least represented age group, with 3 respondents (2%) aged 11-16 and 1 respondent (0.6%) aged 17-19.

Respondents described their ethnic backgrounds in a variety of different ways (Figure 3). 59 respondents (39.5%) described their ethnic background as 'White British'. 15 participants (10%) described themselves as 'English' and 11 (7.3%) as 'British'. 3 respondents (2%) described their ethnic background as 'Black African', 2 (1.3%) participants defined themselves as 'Indian', and a further 2 respondents stated that their ethnic background was 'Chinese'.

Figure 4 denotes that the majority of respondents were from Pitsea and the surrounding area. 86 respondents (57.7% of the sample) were from the Heart of Pitsea postcode area.

Figure 5 indicates that 40 respondents (26.8% of the sample) worked or went to school in Pitsea. The majority of participants (109 or 73.1%) did not.

Figure 1 – What is your gender?

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	29	19.4
Female	117	78.5
Other	1	0.6
Did not answer	2	1.3
Total	149	

Figure 2 – What age group do you belong to?

Age group	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
11-16	3	2.0
17-19	1	0.6
20-29	6	4.0
30-39	35	23.4
40-49	37	24.8
50-59	16	10.7
60-64	15	10.0
65+	36	24.1
Total	149	

Figure 3 – How would you describe your ethnic background?

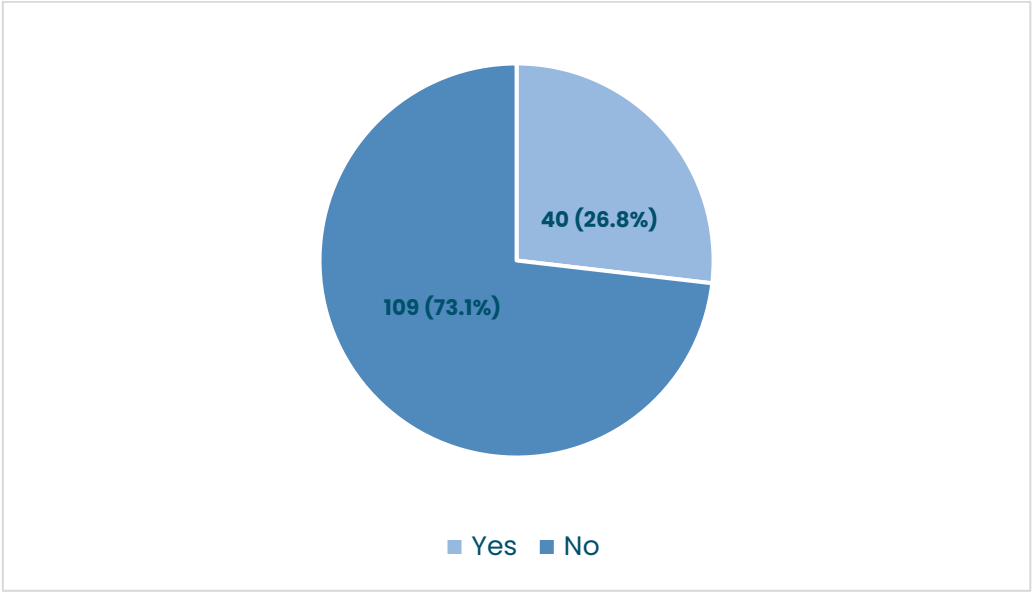
Description of ethnic background	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Black	2	1.3
Black African	3	2.0
Black British	1	0.6
British	11	7.3
British White	4	2.6
Caucasian/white	1	0.6
Chinese	2	1.3
English	15	10.0
European	1	0.6
Half American, half English	1	0.6
I don't know	1	0.6
Indian	2	1.3
Mixed	2	1.3
Mixed (British/Indian/Jamaican/Scottish)	1	0.6
Other white	1	0.6
Pakistani	1	0.6
Prefer not to stay	1	0.6
White	22	14.7
White British	59	39.5
White English	11	7.3
White English/British	1	0.6
Unspecified	6	4.0
Total	149	

Figure 4 – What is your postcode?

Postcode	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
CM11	1	0.6
SS11 8	1	0.6
SS13	5	3.3
SS13 1	13	8.7
SS13 2	13	8.7
SS13 3	86	57.7
SS14 1	3	2.0
SS14 2	3	2.0
SS14 3	3	2.0
SS15	1	0.6
SS15 5	2	1.3
SS15 6	1	0.6
SS16	1	0.6
SS16 4	7	4.6
SS16 5	2	1.3
SS17 0	1	0.6
SS17 7	1	0.6
SS18 9	1	0.6
Not provided	4	2.6
Total	149	

Heart of Pitsea postcode area

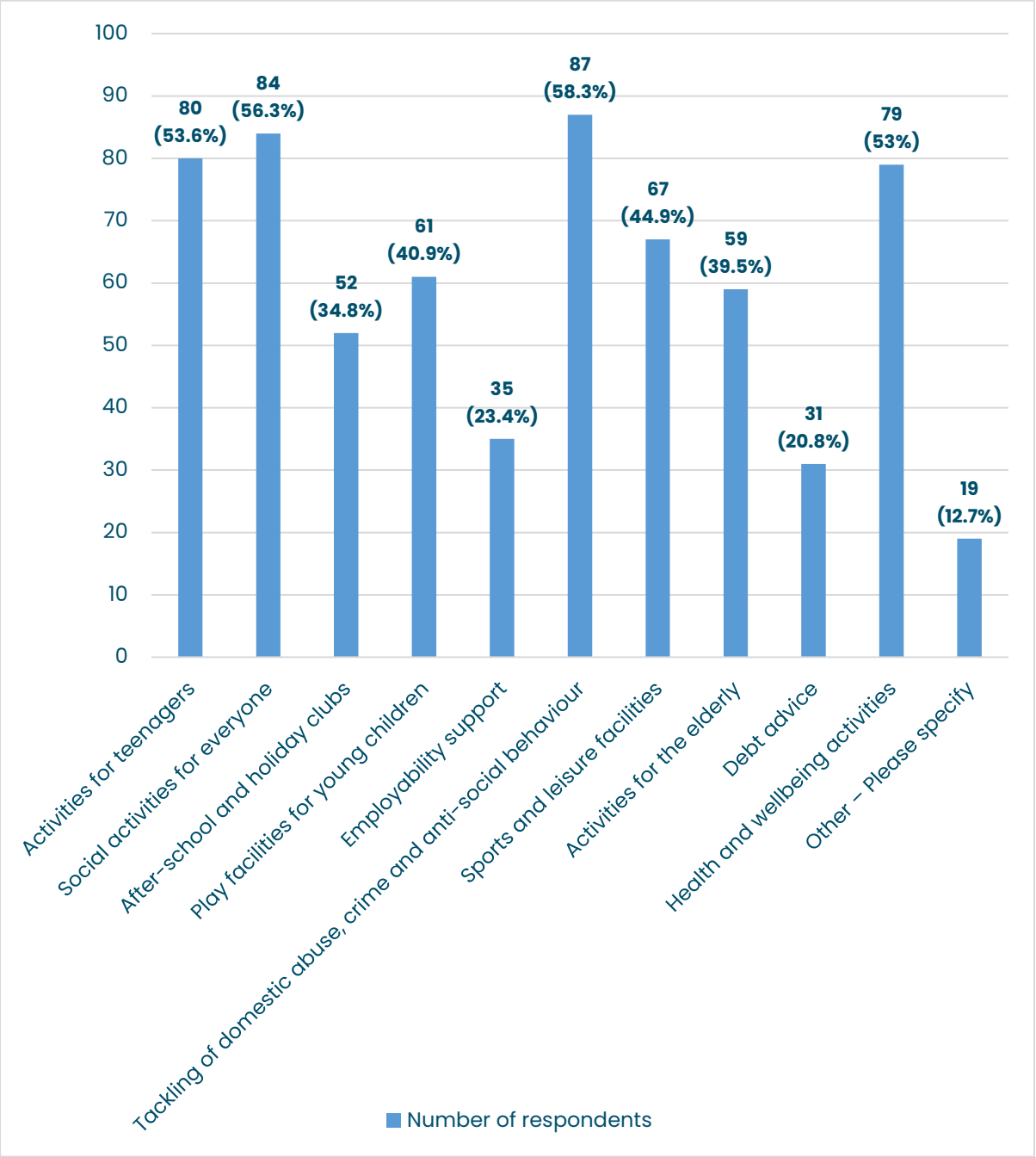
Figure 5 – Do you work or go to school in Pitsea?



3.0 Survey findings

The remaining survey questions explored the experiences and views of Pitsea residents. The following section will provide an overview of responses to each question.

1. Which of the following would you like to see in our community?

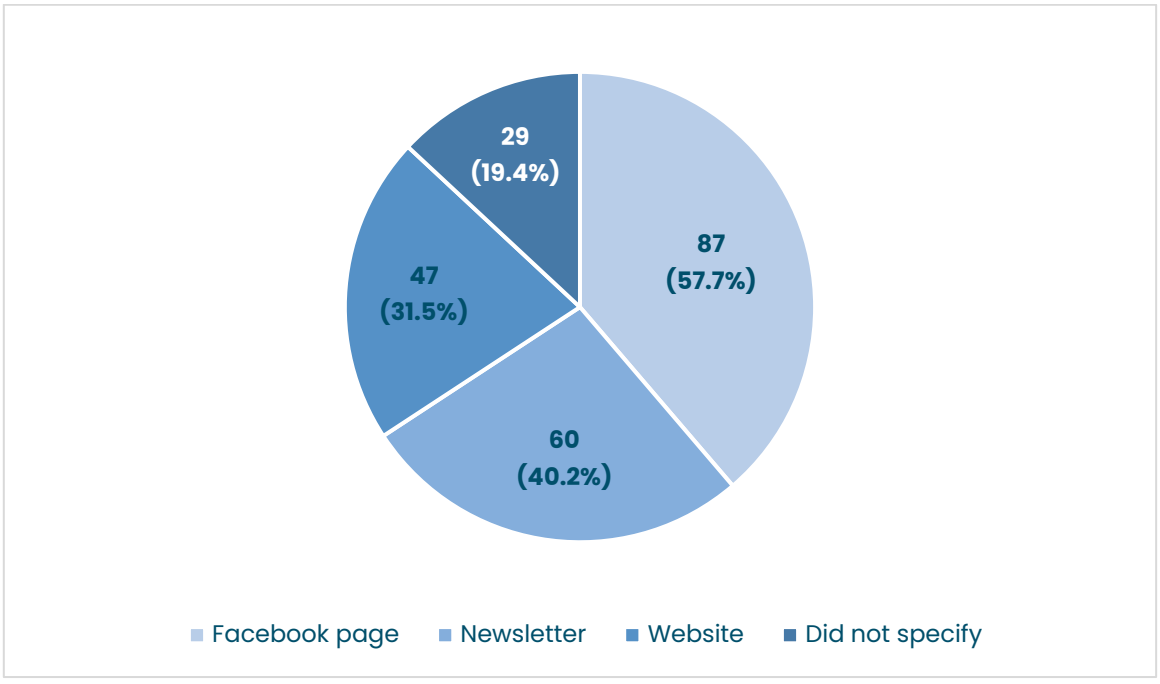


Respondents were provided with a list of activities and initiatives and asked which ones they would like to see in their community. The options were:

- Activities for teenagers
- Social activities for everyone
- After-school clubs and holiday clubs
- Play facilities for young children
- Employability support
- Tackling of domestic abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Sports and leisure facilities
- Activities for elderly
- Debt advice
- Health and wellbeing advice

Participants typically selected multiple activities and initiatives, and several chose all options. The most popular options were tackling of domestic abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour (87 respondents or 58.3%), social activities for everyone (84 or 56.3%), activities for teenagers (80 or 53.6%), and health and wellbeing activities (79 or 53%). 19 respondents chose 'Other' but did not specify alternative activities.

2. Have you seen or looked at the Heart of Pitsea?



120 people responded to this question indicating that they had directly engaged with the Heart of Pitsea in some format.

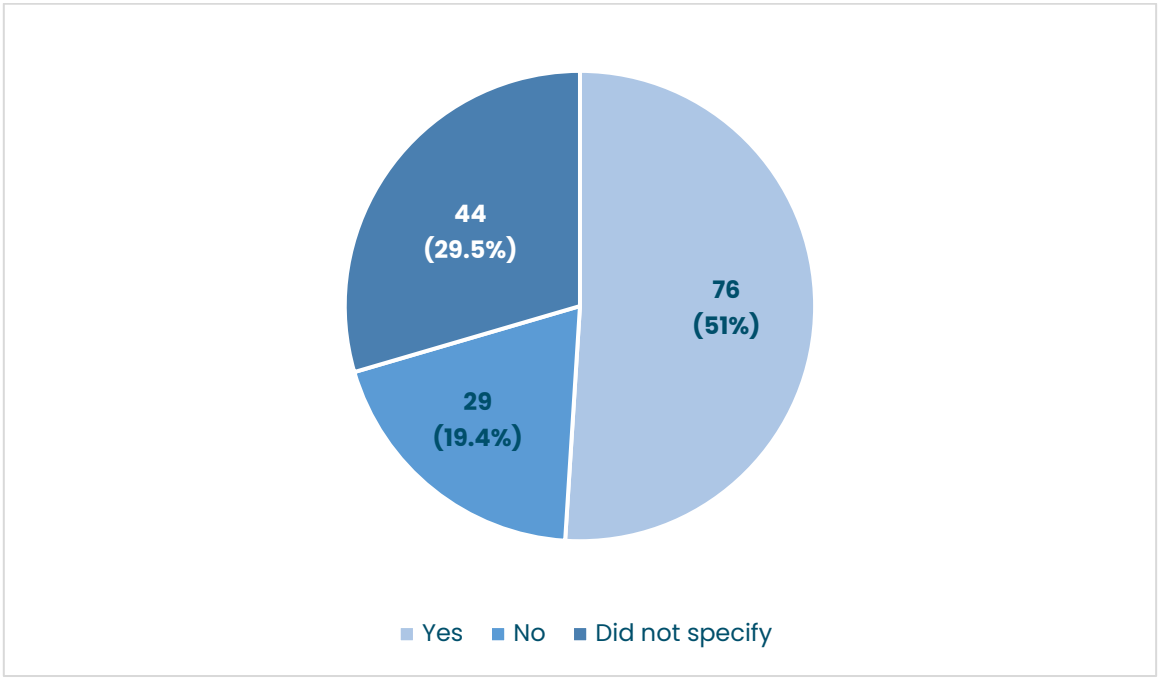
More than half of the data sample (87 respondents or 57.7%) had seen or looked at the Heart of Pitsea's Facebook page.

60 respondents (40.2%) had engaged with the Heart of Pitsea's newsletter.

Just under a third (47 individuals or 31.5%) had seen the Heart of Pitsea's website.

29 individuals (19.4% of the data sample) did not respond, suggesting that they have not engaged with the Heart of Pitsea via Facebook, the newsletter, or website.

3a. Are there any issues or challenges currently affecting your family?



Over half of respondents (76 or 51%) stated that they or their family were currently facing issues or challenges. 29 (19.4%) indicated that they were not facing any issues or challenges. Just under a third of survey participants (44 or 29.5%) did not respond to the question.

If so, what are they?

This question was optional. Participants indicated a range of issues and challenges that they or their family were currently facing. Recurring topics included roads and pavements, a need for tailored support for children and young people, and anti-social behaviour. Topics raised can be categorised into the following themes:

- Support for people living with disabilities:

  'Disability having to use scooter / wheel chair'.

'Places for disabled'.

- Accessing a doctor.
- Clubs for the elderly.
- An absence of tailored support for children and young people:

  'SEN [special educational needs] child has no way of socialising as she goes to school out of area.'

  'Mental health support for children.'

  'My teens spend every free minute on the e-devices. They don't go out anymore.'

  'Not enough activities for children of all ages.'

  'Providing childcare during holidays that's affordable when both parents are working.'

  'My daughter is disabled and we don't get to go out places much but there also is not a lot to do with them 3 small children in the area.'

  'Lack of safe / informally supervised spaces for teenagers.'

  'Home educating'

- Anti-social behaviour:

  'Awareness of youths'

  'Drug dealing and anti social behaviour, poor lighting on streets'.

  'Fly tipping and scams'.

  'Children running around being loud late at night'.

'On the Chalvedon Park area, motorbikes going up and down the field while children play'.

'Anti-social behaviour from nearby house. Riding motorbikes and quads around the estate and being threatening when they nearly hit people. They are dumping mattresses etc on the field behind their house.

- Roads, pavements and footpaths, including underpasses and communal spaces. Respondents raised general issues, as well as those tailored to specific areas:

'Pot holes, overgrown bushes, weeds growing in cracks on foot paths. Broken uneven foot paths'

'Speed limit down our cul-de-sac as it's right by an entrance to Northlands Park. I worry about accidents happening'.

'The state of pavements'

'Roads, some badly damaged'

'Anti-social parking on Sundays'

'Poor lighting walking to transport'

'The pavement in and around pitsea it so bad the path that runs from The pitsea library to the park isn't safe or looked after the trees are so over grown that at night the street lights make no difference making it dangerous to walk'

'Upkeep of green spaces'

'Coaches for pupils of Northlands school park in Carlisle Way, this makes it very difficult when leaving Bodiam Close, my street as you cannot see round them of any vehicle entering Carlisle Way from Winifred Road. It is very dangerous and you will hit another vehicle before you see it [...] This is extremely dangerous where they park as previously stated and they clearly do not care who they put in danger. Also, parents of the school who constantly block driveways'.

'Pond at the Legacy Park'

'Yes why can't parking bays be painted in parking areas to avoid ignorant users taking up two parking spaces'

'Can't go out after dark as it doesn't feel safe. Going out through the day is a minefield with the terrible state of the footpaths.'

'Parking for working people in pitsea'.

- Cost of living:

'Heating costs'

'Money. Long-term sick'

'Affordability of utilities (gas & electric)

'Everything anyone does costs too much'

'Debt'

Looking for employment.

- Housing:

'We need more council housing'

'The state of the Chalvedon estate is a constant aggravation'

'New bungalows being built in front of our homes'

'Currently in temporary accommodation after a stint in hotel'

'Overcrowding due to long waiting list for council houses'

- Mental health:

'There is not a lot of help for mental health for men'

3b. What would make things better for you?

46 respondents provided suggestions about how their lives could be improved. Suggestions can be grouped into the following categories:

- **Waste disposal:**
    - More accessible information about how to sort rubbish.
    - Reinstatement of the 'Crunch' mobile tip facilities to dispose of large items including furniture.
    - Free garden refuse collection.
- **Highways:**
    - Repairs made to pavements and underpasses.
    - Better street lighting (with specific mention of Travers Way and Wickford Avenue).
    - Railings to stop cars parking on pavement and designated loading bays for businesses.
    - Better cycle paths.
    - Better parking management around schools.
    - Increased parking for working people.
- **Housing and public spaces:**
    - Improved maintenance of public areas.
- **Public services and social support:**
    - Better public transport.
    - Being able to access help regardless of criteria.
    - More help and advice for struggling families.
    - Free legal advice.
    - Retaining the local library:

      'Not having the library knocked down! It's our safe place as an autistic family'.

- **Support for children and young people:**
  - More facilities for teenagers.
  - Small, age-appropriate social groups for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
  - Children's mental health support to supplement Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS).
  - Free clubs for teenagers that are not oriented around sport.
  - Subsidised childcare options for those who work.
- **Anti-social behaviour:**
  - More visible policing including community officers who can support the safety of young people.
  - Police presence in the evenings.
- **Health and wellbeing:**
  - Cheaper fitness facilities including gyms, weight loss support, and swimming.
- **Community groups and activities:**
  - More community events that are free of charge:

    'Make more things free or a donation keep the community feeling like they are included and can take their children out without worrying about money, and not sat at home cause not everyone can afford to take them out and do anything with them'.

  - Adult social groups that aren't mental health orientated.
  - Gated community allotment.
  - Community cinema.
- **Increased activities for the elderly:**
  - Concerns were raised about whether the relocation of the Over 50 Club would isolate some individuals who currently access it.

4. Do you have any suggestions for activities that you would like to participate in at the new Men's Shed when it opens?

63 participants responded to this question.

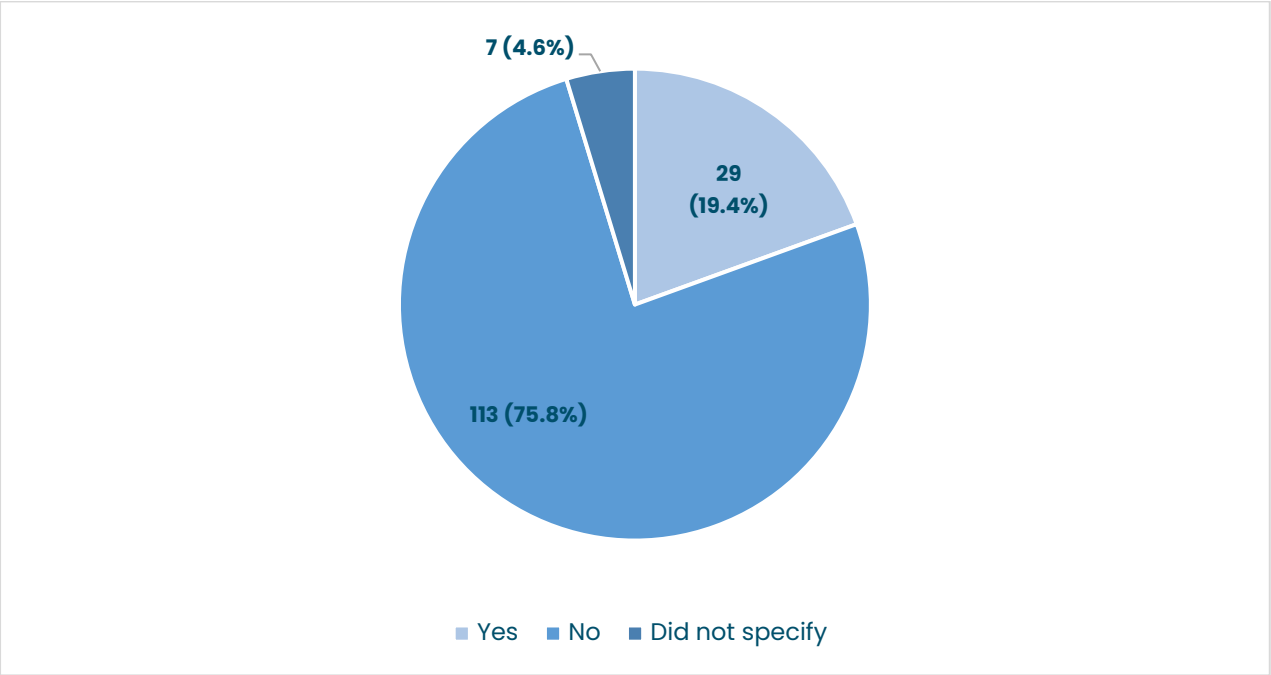
Several participants stated that they did not know about the Men's Sheds initiative.

A number of female respondents expressed an interest in joining a women's group that incorporated the activities typically run at a Men's Sheds site.

Other suggestions included:

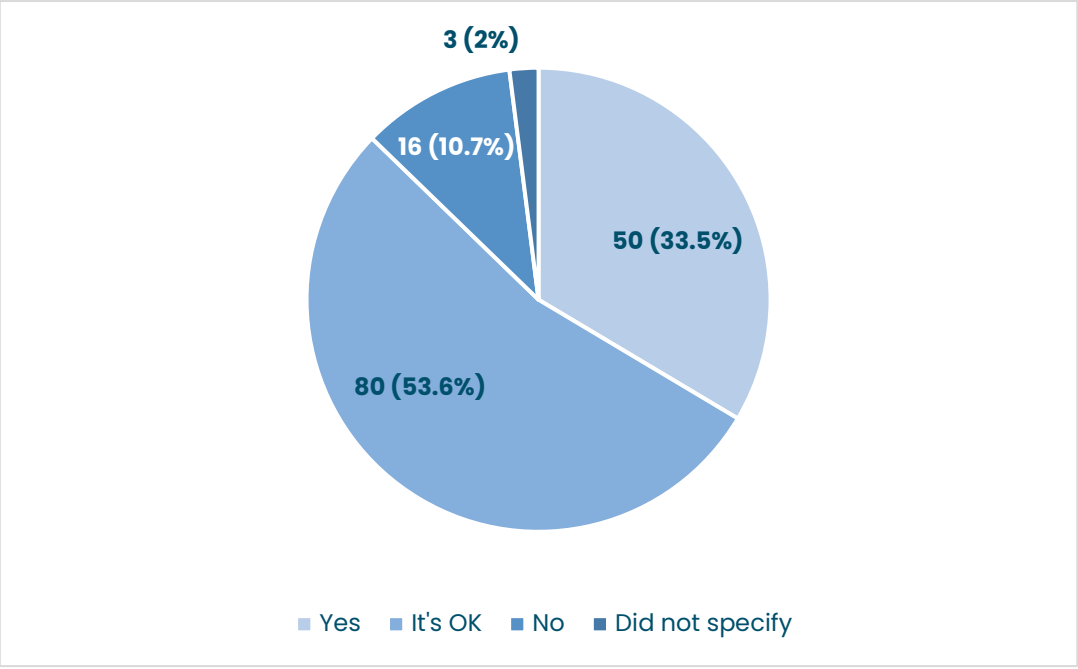
- Arts and crafts sessions
- Baking workshops
- Car maintenance
- Cheese competition
- Engineering
- Experts in different crafts offering advice and examples of good practice.
- Games nights (including Warhammer, poker, and video gaming)
- Metalwork
- Music lessons
- Photography group
- Pool table
- Sailing (ribs)
- Support group for men who are primary carers
- Table football
- Woodwork (including carpentry, nature-based woodwork, and simple DIY).

5. Do you feel that you can currently influence decisions affecting our local community?



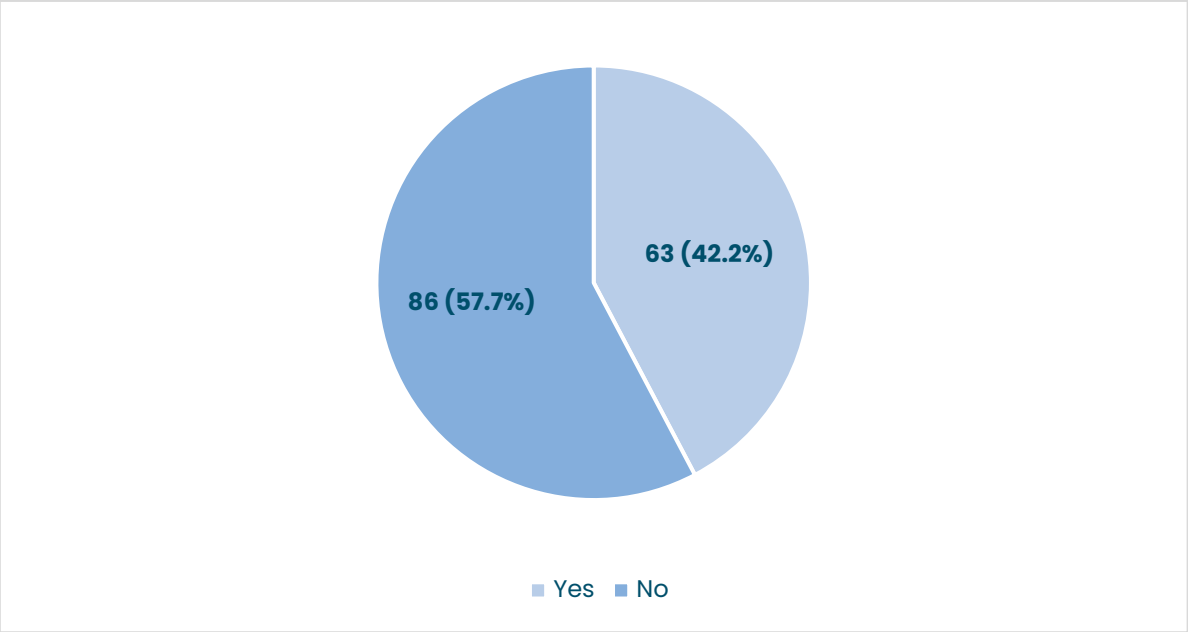
Over three quarters of respondents (113 individuals or 75.8% of the data sample) did not feel as though they can currently influence decisions affecting their local community. 29 participants (19.4%) felt that they could. 7 individuals (4.6%) left this response blank.

6. Do you love where you live?



A third of participants (50 individuals or 33.5% of the data sample) agreed that they loved where they live. Just over half (80 respondents or 53.6%) felt that the area where they live is okay. 16 respondents (10.7%) stated 'No' when asked if they love where they live. 3 respondents (2% of the sample) did not complete the question.

7. Have you been involved in any of Heart of Pitsea's clubs, events or activities?



63 respondents (42.2% of the data sample) stated that they have been involved in Heart of Pitsea clubs, events or activities.

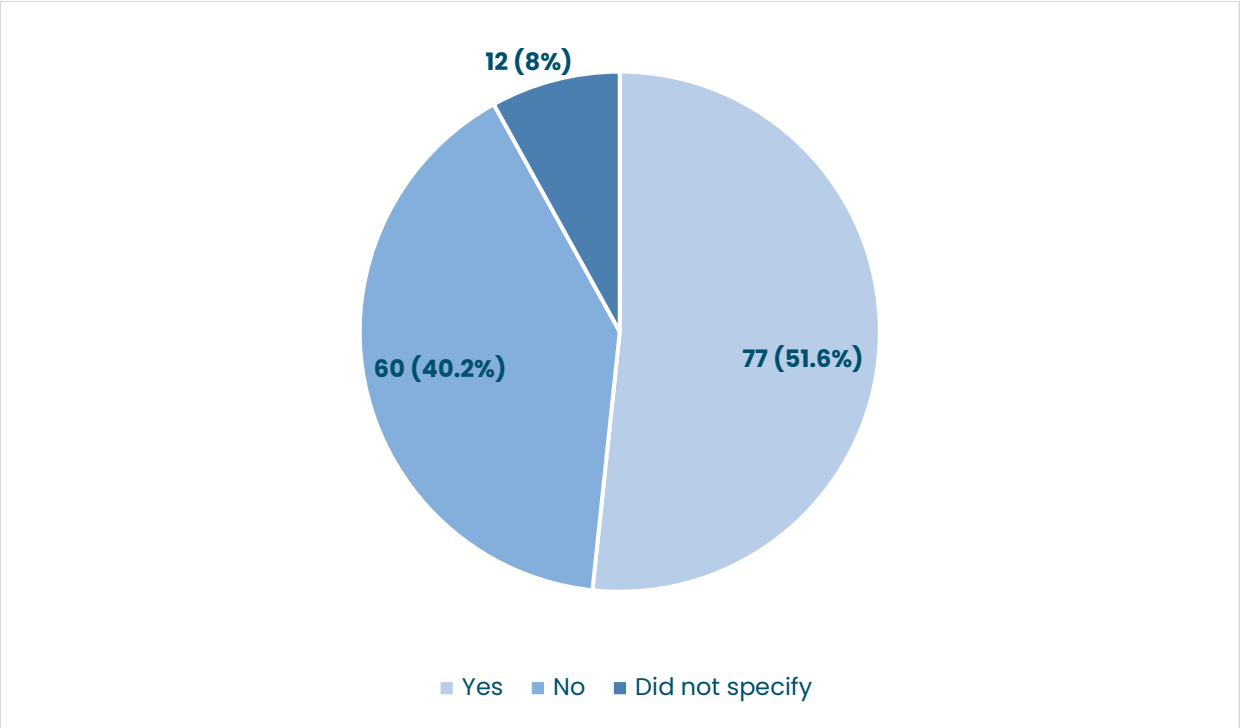
86 individuals (57.7%) stated that they had not participated in Heart of Pitsea's initiatives.

Those who have been involved in activities gave the following examples:

- Activities on local playing fields
- Bouncy castles/inflatable day
- Boxing
- Carnival Fun Day
- Children's events at Legacy Park
- Christmas events
- Craig Tyler Trust activities
- Cribbs Bereavement Group
- Community health market (Dipple Medical Centre)
- Easter egg hunt
- Fairs

- Football
- Forest Club
- Fun days
- Membership of Heart of Pitsea Committee
- Over 50 Club
- Pitsea Library activities
- Pitsea Pots
- Planting in Beambridge
- Quiz nights
- Race nights
- Sports events (Elm View)
- Swimming
- Suicide Prevention Group
- Volunteering (Pitsea Library)
- Walking Group
- Wellness Walks
- Wednesday Club
- Youth club

8. Are you aware of what Heart of Pitsea has been doing in the community since 2013?



Over half of participants (77 individuals or 51.6% of the data sample) stated that they were aware of what Heart of Pitsea has been doing in the community since 2013. 60 respondents (40.2%) were not aware. 12 individuals (10%) did not provide a response.

If yes, please provide a brief description.

Those who were aware of Heart of Pitsea were asked to provide a brief description of its work. Many respondents provided definitions that praised the Heart of Pitsea programme and indicated the range of activities that it facilitates:

> *An amazing job, creating spaces for a multitude of people such as youths, lots of activities and community events, crime prevention, holiday clubs. Lots of really positive stuff for our community.*
>
> *Activities for children during summer, Easter hunt, Christmas market fayre.*
>
> *Lots of projects to help engage our community. Masks in pandemic, Easter egg hunts for kids, Christmas event on Northlands Pavement, wellness walks.*
>
> *Too much to describe here!*

Some respondents stated that Heart of Pitsea had a positive impact on the community:

> *Bringing the community together providing support and activities for young children, the elderly. heart if pitsea is a million times more beneficial than our local council*
>
> *Heart of Pitsea do a great job supporting the community. Community Walks, Crime Awareness, Quiz Nights*

Others defined Heart of Pitsea by the support it provides for children and young people:

> *Local groups for kids. Half term activities.*
>
> *I know they run games behind me in the part in the summer.*

I am aware of the summer activities that are held for children in Elm Greem and the crime prevention.

Participants who stated that they were not aware of Heart of Pitsea and its work also indicated why:

No as it is not very known about what it provides to others and help it gives and what is being done there unless you go in there and get a leaflet or have social media or internet and not everyone does have access.

Not really. I've lived in Basildon Pitsea all my life. I'm concerned when The Place closes all the activities will stop and not start again.

4.0 Conclusion

This report analyses the data collected for the Heart of Pitsea Resident Survey 2023. The 2023 survey builds on previous resident surveys produced in 2013, 2017, and 2021 as part of Heart of Pitsea's 10-year community development programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund. As this funding comes to an end, the Heart of Pitsea Resident Survey 2023 aims to map the positive changes that have occurred in the community since the programme started.

The survey was completed by 149 residents, who either accessed it online or completed hard copies distributed across community spaces in the local area. The majority of respondents were female (78.5%). The most represented age groups across participants were 30-39, 40-49, and 65+. Very few respondents (3) were aged 19 or under, meaning that the data's representation of children and young people's views was limited. Respondents described their ethnic backgrounds in a variety of different ways. The most represented cohort (59 respondents or 39.5%) identified as 'White British. The majority of participants were from the Heart of Pitsea postcode area (86 or 57.7%). However, only a quarter of respondents (40 or 26.8%) worked or went to school in Pitsea. The majority of participants (109 or 73.1%) did not. Most respondents (87 or 57.7%) learnt about Heart of Pitsea via its Facebook page.

The remaining survey questions explored the views and experiences of Pitsea residents. Respondents asserted that there was a need in their local community for initiatives that tackled domestic abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour (87 respondents or 58.3%); social activities for everyone (84 or 56.3%); activities for teenagers (80 or 53.6%); and health and wellbeing activities (79 or 53%). Several respondents selected more than one service or initiative that they would like to see established in their local area.

Respondents linked the need for these activities to the challenges that they and their families are currently facing. Over half (76 or 51%) of participants stated that they were facing such issues. Several respondents noted the anti-social behaviour they had witnessed, including drug dealing. Many felt that roads, pavements, and local green spaces were not suitably maintained. Poor street lighting was also a safety concern. Participants expressed a need for tailored support for children and young people that extended beyond sports activities and was accessible for those with special educational needs (SEN). Housing was also deemed an issue, with the

upkeep on the Chalvedon estate repeatedly cited as a cause for concern. Participants further indicated how the cost of living crisis had affected their health and wellbeing, as local fitness activities like the gym and swimming were not always affordable.

Participants provided a number of solutions that they felt would improve their lives. Several of these solutions, such as the upkeep of roads and pavements (filling in potholes, building railings to discourage parking etc.) typically extend beyond Heart of Pitsea's remit. However, suggestions tailored towards community cohesion and local clubs – a community allotment, free fitness classes, and youth clubs – align with Heart of Pitsea's existing work, respond to current concerns about the cost of living, and have the potential to positively impact Pitsea residents.

Questions centred on new initiatives, like Men's Sheds, generated fewer responses (63 participants). This suggests a lack of awareness about this programme in the local community. Some participants stated that they had not heard of Men's Sheds and several female respondents were unsure if they could participate in its activities. Other participants suggested a range of activities, including photography, music lessons, and car maintenance, that they would like to see facilitated there.

The majority of participants (113 individuals or 75.8%) felt that they do not currently influence decisions affecting their local community, which suggests a need for enhanced communication and activities centred on further involving residents in decision-making processes.

A third of participants (50 individuals or 33.5% of the data sample) agreed that they loved where they live. Just over half (80 respondents or 53.6%) felt that the area where they live is okay. 16 respondents (10.7%) stated 'No' when asked if they love where they live.

Over 40% of participants had engaged in Heart of Pitsea initiatives and provided an extensive and varied list of activities that they had been involved in. These ranged from children's fun days to wellness walks and suicide prevention support. This list is testament to the extensive programme of activities that Heart of Pitsea have facilitated over the last ten years.

This was reinforced by the 51% of respondents who stated that they were aware of what the Heart of Pitsea had been doing in the community since 2013. Feedback

from some respondents suggested a greater need to communicate the achievements of Heart of Pitsea initiatives in the local area. However, several participants praised the programme's positive impact on the community, citing the safe spaces, support, and community cohesion it had generated for a range of different groups within the Heart of Pitsea postcode area.