

St Luke's Community Consultation

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the consultation

St Luke's Parochial Trust is a long standing charity that has operated in what was the Parish of St Luke for centuries. It opened a community centre in 1982. Since then the centre has provided community space and services for the neighbourhood. The Trust is keen to build on its history and respond to the changes within the community to become a modern, multi-purpose community organisation that reaches out to the whole neighbourhood and builds upon the momentum of regeneration created by EC1 New Deal for Communities (EC1 NDC).

With this in mind, the Trust is exploring options for improving the community centre. It is considering a number of options including relocating to a different building, rebuilding the centre on the current site, or keeping the centre where it is but investing in major improvements. Before taking steps to make changes or applying for funding that would allow these changes to happen, the Trust wanted to explore what current users of the centre and potential users in the local area want from St Luke's. To this end, the Trust commissioned NatCen to undertake a small-scale community consultation. The broad aims of the consultation were:

- to explore what current users think of the centre;
- to explore what those who do not currently use the centre think of it; and,
- to explore what local residents, both users and non-users, would want from the centre in the future both in terms of physical layout and service provision.

1.2 Consultation design

The consultation was commissioned to take place over a seven-week period in the summer of 2009. In order to address the consultation aims above, the research team adopted five different but linked approaches to the consultation:

- A brief familiarisation exercise;
- Group discussions and interviews with members of the local community;
- A public meeting held at St Luke's Centre;
- Ad hoc consultations at local events; and
- Face-to-face consultations using a short survey template.

The details of each approach are outlined below.

Familiarisation Exercise

The purpose of the familiarisation exercise was to give the research team a brief insight into some of the history and context of the St Luke's centre and Trust and to understand more about the local area and some of the issues that might impact on local residents' views. The research team had intended to do this by carrying out a small number of interviews with staff and trustees at the centre. Once the team started these interviews, it became apparent that there was real value in hearing the views of a wider number of stakeholders and in doing so not just for background to the consultation but as part of the consultation itself. In total, the team carried out 10 interviews. These interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours and were recorded with participants' permission. A full list of completed interviews can be found in Appendix A.

Group discussions and interviews with members of the local community

As part of the familiarisation exercise, the research team explored which groups of people in the community should be directly targeted as part of the consultation. Given the short timescale of the exercise only a limited number of groups could be focused on. Following initial conversations with St Luke's staff and trustees it was agreed that group discussions should be conducted with the following groups:

- Older users of the centre
- Younger users of the centre
- Parents
- Bangladeshi local residents
- Somali local residents
- Non-users

There were a number of challenges to recruiting these groups due to both the short timescale for the consultation and people's availability to participate over the summer months which resulted in the final make-up of the groups being slightly different. The final breakdown of the groups that were carried out is as follows:

Group	Whether users or non-users of the centre	Age range of respondents	Number of participants in group
Older users	Users	66+	4
Older users	Mixed	56+	5
Younger users	Users	16-25	5
Younger users	Users	16-25	4
Middle-age users	Mixed	36-55	7
Bangladeshi local residents	Mixed	36-75	6
Total number of participants			31

Group participants were recruited in various ways. An 'opt out' letter was sent by St Luke's on behalf of the consultation team to St Luke's contact database seeking permission to pass on contact details to the researchers. Once the opt-out period had passed researchers made contact with a targeted number of people and asked them to assist with finding participants from a specific demographic. Alongside this, the research team also carried out desk research to find contact details for local organisations such as Tenant Management Organisations and Bangladeshi community groups. We made contact with these groups and used that initial contact to snowball to further contact. Potential participants were given a leaflet informing them of the purpose and nature of the consultation. Each participant was offered £20 as a thank you for their time.

The groups were conducted by experienced facilitators using a topic guide which can be found in Appendix B. The purpose of the topic guide was to help focus and shape the discussion, while allowing each group to generate and discuss relevant issues as they arose in an open way. The groups were conducted using open, non-leading questions and answers were probed for depth. Each group discussion lasted around one and a half hours. The broad topics discussed within the groups were:

- Use of the current centre
- Likes and dislikes about the current centre
- Use of other services in the area

- Thoughts on a new St Luke's

All groups were digitally recorded, with the participants' permission, and transcribed verbatim for analysis except the Bangladeshi group which was conducted in Bengali and then written up in English by the researcher.

Public meeting

As well as targeting specific members of the community who may have an interest in St Luke's the consultation team were keen to ensure that anyone who wanted to have their say about the future of St Luke's had the opportunity. To this end the team hosted a public meeting at St Luke's. The meeting took place between 6.30 and 8pm on a Tuesday evening. The meeting was advertised through various means including mail outs from St Luke's and Timebank staff as well as posters and leaflets in the centre and shops in the local area. The research team also mentioned the public meeting informally to anyone they came into contact with during the course of the consultation. Refreshments were offered by way of an incentive.

Turnout for the public meeting was poor with only 11 participants. There are a number of possible reasons for this low turnout. It could be that the time of year meant that many local residents simply were not available, that since the meeting took place towards the end of the consultation period those who wanted their say had already had that opportunity, that the meeting was not well advertised enough or that there was limited interest among the local community in attending an event on this subject.

Given the numbers were low, the research team decided to run the meeting as a focus group using the topic guide outlined above. The meeting was not recorded as the team had taken the decision not to seek permission to record in case this discouraged people from attending. Instead full notes of the meeting were taken by two researchers. Despite the low attendance, the discussion was lively and yielded rich data.

Face to face consultations

Alongside the more formal interviews and discussion groups the research team felt it was important to give as many people as possible the opportunity to share their views. The team sought opportunities to speak to people more informally as they used the centre. This included having a presence at the St Luke's fun day and placing a member of the research team in the centre to approach people and ask them if they were interested in sharing their views. To capture these views, the team developed a short survey pro forma that included closed and open questions. The pro forma was used in a very flexible way. In some cases respondents completed it themselves. In others the researcher completed it on their behalf. In total the views of 73 respondents were captured in this way. A copy of the pro forma and a breakdown of respondents from this element of the consultation can be found in Appendices C and D.

1.3 Report Outline

The rest of this report presents the results of the consultation. **Chapter 2** sets out people's view of the current St Luke's centre. **Chapter 3** explores people's thoughts on what St Luke's should look like in the future and **Chapter 4** draws together the key findings from the consultation.

Throughout the report, verbatim quotations are used to illustrate the findings. They are labelled to show the part of the consultation the relevant participant was involved in as well as their gender and age, where this is known.

2 Views about the current centre

2.1 Current use of the centre

What people use the centre for

It is clear that the way in which people use and engage with the centre varies hugely. Broadly speaking there are three different ways in which people told us they are currently using the centre. First, there are those people who use a range of the activities and services on offer and who are interacting with the centre, its staff and other users regularly. Then there are others who use the centre less for organised activities and more as a space in which to socialise. Finally, there are those who simply see it as a physical space to use, either because it offers facilities that are useful to them, or because it represents a space outside the home where they can just 'be'. Each of these usages is explored in more detail below. Although there was disparity in the way the centre was used, there was broad agreement that the centre was valuable to the community and of benefit to individuals...

There is a distinct population of centre users who come to the centre as a place to engage in particular activities. Older users said that on the one hand the centre offered them the sorts of activities that they would expect to see provided for older people such as Bingo and Hoy but also other activities that they might not expect such as computer classes. These were mentioned as being important to help older users feel in touch with the world and to access a service that they did not have the opportunity to reach when they were younger.

A range of other classes were mentioned as being used regularly including dance classes, art classes, cooking courses and exercise classes. Organised trips were believed to be well attended and the Bangladeshi group in particular saw these trips as a valuable service. There was limited mention among those we spoke to of the use of services such as legal and housing advice: it may be that these services are used less regularly, or by people who do not then engage with the centre in other ways.

Socialising was also one of the key reasons given for using the centre. People spoke about how the centre provided the opportunity to meet people, either informally through general contact or through organised activities and outings. This aspect of the centre was seen as invaluable particularly among older users which is perhaps not surprising since the centre was historically a place for older people and many of the users have had contact with the centre for a number of years.

I find that coming to St Luke's has helped a lot. I retired about three years ago and if I did not attend the centre I would spend all of my time at home. At St Luke's I participate with others and enjoy my Spanish Classes, line dancing and look forward to how to use the internet.

(Female survey respondent, 66-75)

In talking about the centre as a place to come and be with other people, participants emphasised the importance of St Luke's feeling like a welcoming and homely place, and somewhere that they felt comfortable and wanted to return to again and again.

You can come in and sit and have a cup of tea. You can sit and read a paper. But then you converse with people, you talk to people.

(Female, older users' group)

For the people who used the centre in this way, there was a real sense that St Luke's was so much more than a building or collection of services. For them it represented a way to engage with other people and to feel part of something bigger.

I suppose I get a sense of being connected to the community which is, in central London...I think quite rare.

(Male, 36-55 group)

There were also those participants for whom St Luke's was more of a physical space than a social one. For example, some participants said that their only contact with the centre was to hire out space within it for functions or meetings, or to use the computers. Others spoke about the allotments and indicated that while they attend their allotment regularly, they do not really engage with anything that is going on inside the centre.

Barriers to use of the centre

All participants were asked what prevented them from either using the centre at all or using it more. Two clear reasons emerged: Not knowing about the centre, or the activities and services it offers and not feeling comfortable about using the centre.

Not knowing about the centre or the activities and services it offered was attributed in part to St Luke's marketing approach. There was considerable discussion throughout the consultation about how St Luke's promotes itself. This will be covered in detail in Chapter 3 where we also outline participants' thoughts about how marketing and communications activities could be taken forward in the future. The main point to mention here is that participants felt that there was insufficient information both about the existence of St Luke's and about what it offers. Even those who use St Luke's regularly were unaware of many of the activities and services that are available. Newer users mentioned that they had not used St Luke's in the past because they had not realised what it was. It was suggested that the centre looks more like a school than a community centre and that this acts as a barrier to more people making use of its service.

M: All my life I've walked past this building thinking it was a school.

F: I thought it was a school as well, yeah. [laughs]

M: It still looks like a school. Until they put a note, they put a notice on our notice board in the flats, I didn't realise it was a, there were, it was, it was, there was a cybercafé here.

F: I am sure if it was better advertised it would be used [by] a lot more people.

(Conversation between two participants, male and female, older people's group)

The second key barrier to using the centre was a concern about not fitting in with other users. This was mentioned by young people who said that they sensed that the centre was largely for older people and that this made them feel slightly uncomfortable. Other users spoke about there being strong established relationships between existing centre users which made it harder to get to know people, especially if you were less outgoing. Older users also spoke about it being difficult for some people to come to the centre on their own if they did not know anyone as they could feel out of place.

Opinions on the current centre

Views on the centre as it stands were mixed. While there was huge support of the centre and many users really valued what it offered, there were also some areas that people were less pleased with. Here we look at what people liked and did not like about the current centre in turn.

There were a number of aspects of the centre that participants were immensely positive about. The centre itself was viewed as a 'lovely building' which was well kept and accessible. The outside area was considered a real bonus and touches within the centre such as the plants near reception were seen as very welcoming. Young people also spoke about the flexibility of the space within the centre and said that they appreciated the availability of rooms to go and have a quiet chat in. The atmosphere within the centre was also raised as a positive. Participants spoke about it feeling clean and safe. Young people said they liked the fact that it was open when they came out of school in the time before youth clubs open as it gave them somewhere to go and do their homework and to hang out. The Bangladeshi group said that they liked to visit the centre to see what was going on even if they did not have a specific class or meeting to attend.

Facilities linked to the centre were also praised. Allotment holders spoke about how much they liked spending time at their plot and there was discussion about there being waiting lists to get an allotment. The bus was mentioned by older users and Bangladeshi groups and some said that they would not be able to come to St Luke's without this transport. Participants in the Bangladeshi group also said that they appreciated the facility to borrow bikes. The potential to hire either the whole centre or parts of it was also appreciated and participants thought that the prices represented very good value for money. Finally the computers were raised as being a really useful resource.

Staff at the centre were praised for being friendly, welcoming and knowledgeable. Centre staff and volunteers were also seen as providing a gateway to the services offered by St Luke's and participants expressed their appreciation of that.

Participants also spoke about the friendly atmosphere generated by other users in the centre and the fact that this made it a nice place to be. For some, this was expressed in terms of accessibility and it being easy to talk to and communicate with people working in and using the centre.

Erm, in not just in terms of it being literally you know, easy to get in and out of but erm, as I say, you know, when I've used it it's, I just feel welcome and feel as though I can just come and go. You know, I would feel, at ease to come in and go at any time really.

(Male, 36-55 group)

The range of services offered by St Luke's was also raised as a positive aspect of the centre. Participants spoke about the variety of services on offer and how there was something for most people. The lunches were seen as a core service by a range of users but particularly by older users of the centre who spoke about the good value that the lunches represented. There was recognition among participants that the lunches were very cheap and that St Luke's subsidised them and this was discussed as both unique and valuable. Participants also said that they liked the fact that St Luke's hosted events that they could go to, specifically the fun days.

There were also some aspects of the centre that people were less positive about. Many of the dislikes of the centre focused on the way in which the centre had changed in recent years. There was a sense among long-standing users that the ethos of the centre had changed recently and that the centre was more business-focussed and driven to make money than it used to be. However,

there was also recognition that the centre must cost a lot to run and that it needed to make money in order to be able to keep going.

Older users also spoke about the shortage of male users at the centre. There were those who attributed this to a change in the provision available for men including the closure of the bar and the removal of darts and snooker as activities. Others thought that there being fewer men was to be expected:

F: Is it also though that something, a community centre like this is more attractive to women generally. Do you think that men are less likely to come along?

M: Well, it's kind of chicken and egg really. They are less likely to come along but maybe if there are more things to attract them they might come along

(Discussion between two participants in older users group)

The Bangladeshi group also spoke about the fact that there used to be an Asian member of staff at St Luke's who would encourage them to use services at the centre. They said that they missed having her around.

Opinions on who the centre is for

The question of who the centre is for and should be for in the future was raised as part of the consultation. This was in light of the centre having recently shifted its focus so that the centre was no longer just for older members of the community but for the community as a whole. It is important to note that while the question of who the centre should be for was specifically asked of participants it was also something that was raised spontaneously throughout the consultation.

Unsurprisingly the centre's recent shift in focus to the wider community was most noticeable in the responses of older users as they were the ones who had seen it happen and there were mixed views of this change. On the one hand there was a strong view that the centre had been set up for older people and should remain that way. Three interlinked reasons were given for this view. One was that the centre no longer felt like a club, something the older people had enjoyed. The second was that it raised concerns about their feelings of safety at the centre because of the number of unknown people who were now using it. The third reason was that they felt it represented a move from the centre's original purpose of serving the local older community.

[St Luke's] needs to be a lot better for pensioners. The new people are taken [sic] over and cutting the old people out. After all, this club was for the elderly.

(Male survey respondent, 66-75)

On the other hand was the view that broadening the offer was necessary to allow new people in especially as some of the older users were unable to use the centre as much as they used to. Some older users said that they welcomed the idea of younger users in the centre and even suggested that more should be done to encourage them in. Indeed, there was a view among older users that having older people use the centre could be off-putting for other potential users. They spoke about the centre having the air of an old people's home because so many older people could be seen sitting in the centre, apparently doing nothing.

It is clear that there is an ongoing tension about access to the centre. Not only were there mixed views among older users about opening the centre up to a broader local population but younger users also spoke about not feeling completely welcome at the centre:

It is a great place for over 50s to go to, they have plenty of activities, the food is great. It would be even better if people below 50 were accepted.

(Female survey respondent 26-35)

The idea of the centre being opened up to other religions was also controversial. Young people felt that this was not a problem so long as broader access did not get in the way of any of the centre's existing activities. Older people were less united. While there were those who felt that it was fine; others were uncomfortable about the prospect of the centre being used by Muslim groups if this meant that there would need to be prayer rooms or other facilities used only by specific groups.

2.2 Use of other local services

A range of services were known to or used by participants in the consultation. These included the Peel Centre – a local community centre - and Golden Lane campus – a children's centre and education centre. Both centres were mentioned by a range of different user and non-user groups although it was not always clear which groups were actually using the centres and which were simply aware of the services they offered. Golden Lane was mentioned by Bangladeshi participants in particular for its language and music classes and computing facilities. Other older participants were users of Hackney Silver Surfers which was felt to be a good model for St Luke's to follow should they develop their computing and IT offer in the future. The Claremont project in Islington and another community centre based in the Essex Road were also mentioned but it was not clear whether and how these centres were used by consultation participants.

Some participants had previously used the Chequer Centre at City and Islington College and had started to use St Luke's when this centre closed down. For some, notably those who participated in the Bangladeshi group discussion, the shift to St Luke's was welcomed as they perceived that the Chequer Centre was located in an 'unsafe' area (although there was no discussion of exactly what participants meant by 'unsafe' in this context). There were older users who reported never using other local services because St Luke's was located so conveniently for them and was perceived to provide the same offer as other local services.

Younger people, as well as other participant groups, noted that the Three Corners Centre had opened and offered services and activities for younger people, although the younger people themselves highlighted its currently limited opening hours (Monday evenings only) and facilities.

Other local services used were sports and leisure facilities – a number of local gyms including the YMCA at Barbican and Ironmonger Row – as well as private classes for activities such as yoga. Some of the older participants in the consultation also reported membership of the City of London Young at Heart programme for over-fifties which offers activities including bowling, dancing and swimming.

In describing how they had been encouraged to use services other than St Luke's, three triggers were evident in people's accounts. First, and relevant across participant groups, was the part played by friends in introducing people to local services they had not previously used. While this clearly played an important role in exposing people to different local services, it was also mentioned consistently as a way of encouraging the use of the current and any new St Luke's centre and is discussed in that context in the next chapter. Older people also particularly mentioned the importance of first visits to other services in encouraging their use. Where staff had been friendly and offered to show new users around – '*taking them under their wing*' – this had encouraged people to return to a service again and helped foster a feeling that the service was for people like them. Finally, participants acknowledged that they were more likely to use services that

were offered free of charge. There is merit in considering how and why people use other services in the local area, and the way in which such services were promoted to them, to shed light on strategies for encouraging use of the current and new St Luke's centre. This discussion is expanded in the following chapter which focuses on views on a new St Luke's centre.

Despite participants reporting use of a range of other local services, a number of barriers to accessing or utilising local services were raised. These are illuminating not only in facilitating an understanding of how and why people use other local services, but they also complement the data gathered about participants' current use of St Luke's. These barriers, and strategies to overcome them, should be considered in plans for a new St Luke's centre and the activities it will offer.

Central to older people's accounts in particular was confusion about eligibility for local services. This confusion comprised a lack of clarity about how 'local' an individual's residence must be to the service to be eligible and the age at which an individual became, or ceased to be, eligible for a service. Participants described services variously as 'for locals' or 'for older people' but were unclear about exactly who would meet these criteria and indeed whether or not these criteria even applied in practice. This appears to be related to the concern expressed in accounts of current use of St Luke's among older people (see Section 2.1) who felt that the centre, and other local services, that had previously been exclusively 'for them' were being opened up to other groups of people.

Another related barrier to accessing local services was anxiety about 'fitting in' with established users of the service. An important avenue for accessing new services for participants in the group discussions were introductions by friends who had taken them along to a new service and helped them to settle in. This was also presented as a way of helping to promote a new St Luke's centre and encourage use and is explored further in the next chapter.

A final and practical barrier to accessing local services was their location. This comprised not only the proximity of the service to the participant's home but also perceptions of the safety of the area within which the service is located. For example, one participant reported that he no longer felt able to use the Islington branch of the Citizen's Advice Bureau since it had relocated to the north of the borough as it was now too far away. As noted above, participants in the Bangladeshi group expressed concern about the location of the former Chequer Centre, feeling that it was 'unsafe' and was therefore not appealing to use.

A further barrier to the use of local services other than St Luke's was a number of perceived gaps in local provision. There was a strong sense across the consultation, that young people are currently provided for well in the local area, in particular children under the age of 16. However, those aged 16 to 25 were not felt to be well provided for. Suggestions of other overlooked groups included people in employment (this was felt to have particular resonance with the opening hours of local services as well as St Luke's – see next chapter for discussion of new centre opening hours), in particular men and the unemployed.

3 Views on the future of the centre

The previous chapter highlighted the value placed on the offer of the St Luke's centre by current users and local residents. This sense of St Luke's as a valuable resource was reflected in participants' reactions to and thoughts about a new St Luke's centre and it appeared difficult for current users in particular to envisage a new centre that was unlike the current one. Consequently, discussions about what a new centre might look like and what it might offer had to be carefully facilitated to encourage participants to think creatively. These discussions focused on three key areas of consideration: the marketing of a new centre; the design and layout of the centre; and, the services and activities offered. The following sub-sections explore each of these issues in detail.

3.1 Marketing the new centre

The issue of how to market a new St Luke's centre was given significant focus by participants at the public meeting as well as by the stakeholders interviewed for the consultation. These discussions in part stemmed from participants' concerns about the efficacy of St Luke's current marketing activities, and reflected the identified challenge for a new centre to attract both current and new users.

In general, marketing was identified as an area in which St Luke's currently 'could do better'. Participants felt that '*St Luke's should blow its own trumpet to the community more*' and that current marketing activities were not effective at reaching all the groups the centre might want to attract either currently or in the future. A key challenge for St Luke's was felt to be its image: participants and stakeholders identified an 'image problem' for the centre in that it is seen by some as currently providing a service only for older people. It was perceived that a lack of marketing activity to other local groups, as well as the very clear 'St Luke's' sign on the centre's mini-bus service used primarily by older people, compounded this. The label 'community centre' was highlighted by the group discussion with people aged 36 to 55 as having connotations of services for older people: this group suggested that a change of name for the new centre - to 'community hub' or similar - would help to address this issue.

Two further issues were highlighted by participants at the public meeting. First, the timing of current marketing activities was felt to give local people insufficient advance notice of upcoming activities and events at the centre. Participants highlighted that in order for people to make space in their busy diaries to attend the centre, the current 'last minute' approach to marketing should be reviewed. It was suggested that events could be 'programmed' in advance. For example, activities specifically for men could take place every Monday, or events could be scheduled to take place on the first Tuesday of the month. It was felt that this could overcome the need for extensive marketing to regular users of the centre who would be able to learn the timetable. A second issue was raised regarding current staffing of the centre. Participants perceived that the proportion of volunteer staff at the centre was very high and that this was related to a lack of resource for focused marketing effort by St Luke's. To address this, it was felt that a paid marketing role was necessary.

Participants at the group discussions and public meeting also considered how and where a new St Luke's centre should advertise its services. A range of avenues were identified, some of which may be used by St Luke's already. Where this is the case, the evidence from the consultation highlights that such avenues may not be effective at reaching particular local groups, or that other avenues may be more fruitful.

Use of advertising in local newspapers and free-papers was mentioned by all groups. In particular, participants suggested that St Luke's should use the listings facility in both the Islington Tribune and the Islington Gazette. These were believed to be free to use and it was felt that they would reach a wide and mixed audience. The use of door-to-door leafleting and the provision of a newsletter were also felt to be effective. However, the Bangladeshi group participants highlighted that some people no longer seemed to receive leaflets which meant they were out of touch with what was going on at the centre. It was also suggested that the newsletter – currently believed to be twice-yearly - could usefully be compiled and distributed more often.

Posters and leaflets at local venues such as the Islington Design Centre and in local schools, libraries and sports centres were also felt by some to reach a broad range of target local groups, although other participants felt notice boards in community venues could be easily overlooked by potential centre users. A concern was raised about activities aimed at reaching such a broad range of local people which appeared to be related to the issue of perceived eligibility for local services discussed previously in this report. There was a concern that 'ineligible' users – for example, those who lived outside the catchment area for St Luke's – could be exposed to this marketing and would then be disappointed at not being able to use St Luke's. Given that some participants were unsettled by St Luke's having recently expanded its offer to a broader range of community groups, it may also be that this represented a concern about people from outside the local area, or too diverse a range of people, becoming aware of and using the centre.

Other, face-to-face methods for marketing St Luke's were also suggested. These included door-knocking activities to distribute marketing materials and talk to people about St Luke's, and presence at local fun days such as the King's Square festival. Suggestions for using technology to market the centre were also suggested, including the use of television screens in the reception of the St Luke's centre and establishing an online forum via which services could be advertised. Some participants suggested that both were either currently used or planned, although it was clear that this awareness was not widely shared.

The strategy for marketing St Luke's to local housing estates was raised by participants at the group discussions and public meeting as one that warranted specific attention. It was felt that information is not currently directed to all estates and questions were raised as to how estate managers currently pass on information to their residents. One participating estate manager noted that estate notice boards tend to be full of local information and advertising for local services and that residents can feel overwhelmed. His suggestion was for a community newsletter to be circulated instead: this would be delivered to residents' doors and would include listings information about events and activities at St Luke's, news about the centre, and key centre contacts. It would also be distributed at other local venues and events. To facilitate and streamline current marketing activity, it was also suggested that the current EC1 New Deal mailing list should be merged with St Luke's to prevent duplication but also ensure information about St Luke's reached all potential user groups within the local area.

3.2 Design and layout of new centre

The identified challenge for a new St Luke's centre to appeal both to current and new users was reflected again in discussions about its physical design and layout. In particular, participants were focused on ensuring the centre was designed such that different groups could use the centre separately and together, and that the centre felt welcoming to different groups of potential users.

The way the new centre looks from the outside was felt to be important to encourage people, specifically new users, to come inside and try out the facilities. It was felt that the current St Luke's centre suffered from looking like a school or a hospital, and it was believed that potential users

could easily walk past without realising what was inside. A view from all the groups participating in the group discussions and public meeting therefore was that the new centre should advertise itself more clearly on the building – simply with a large sign and some information about what is inside. Another consistent view was that a new centre should have large windows on the ground floor to allow people walking past to see inside the building and therefore know what happens inside without having to enter. The use of glass in this way would also help the new centre to look ‘modern’ and so appeal to a broad demographic.

The desire for the new centre to have broad appeal and be useful to and used by a range of community groups was further reflected in participants’ views about the layout and design of the inside of the new building. From the perspectives of participants, the community currently lacks a space that different groups within the community feel able to use, for their own, individual interests but also in which to come together and mix. It was felt that such a space could serve to ‘*make St Luke’s a proper community for the community*’. This poses a challenge for a new centre that aims to fill this gap. Some participants were clear that they did not want any new or re-designed building to designate specific spaces to particular community groups: older people, for instance, did not wish that older and younger users of the centre should be confined to different parts of a building (although it is notable that among the Bangladeshi group participants there was a stronger desire to separate older and younger users). However, there was a recognition among centre staff that mixing different groups, again particularly older users and young people, could prove difficult in practice and that this would need consideration in designing the layout of a new building. Despite this will to share facilities across the whole community, there was some resistance among users who considered themselves ‘secular’ to sharing space with religious groups. The same ‘secular’ users were however equally opposed to religious groups having designated spaces. This contradiction was not resolved in the group discussions and should be considered further by St Luke’s as it moves towards a decision about the new location for its centre and makes plans for how the centre space is used. To facilitate the most flexible use of building space, participants suggested that a new centre should include a number of large rooms with moveable partitions so that community groups could use the same building to come together and interact, as well as make use of smaller spaces for specific activities.

Notwithstanding this stated desire for a true community space, participants identified a number of groups for whom a new St Luke’s centre should make special provision in terms of its physical design. For the mobility impaired, it was suggested that there should be sufficient facilities and space on the ground floor but that the building should be broadly accessible to all users – reliable, working lifts and wheelchair building access were suggested to be key here. It was also suggested that children’s services and activities should be provided on the ground floor to alleviate concerns about that they would otherwise be ‘*running around the building unsupervised*’. Such a consideration will be key for St Luke’s to ensure that different groups are able to use a new St Luke’s centre simultaneously and harmoniously. The use of large windows in a new St Luke’s centre to attract potential users also invites careful consideration of the facilities and activities that take place on the ground floor. For a new centre to appeal to a broad community demographic, it should perhaps reflect this breadth in the way that inside space that is visible from the outside is utilised.

As well as considering how the space within a new St Luke’s centre should be used and by whom, participants expressed a range of other ‘wishes’. Older people were particularly keen that the new centre incorporated some green space – a garden or a lawn – where they could sit outside in the summer months. It was felt to be important that this space is big enough to accommodate both smokers and non-smokers together. Participants also expressed a desire for more allotment space with some even suggesting that this could be accommodated on the roof of a new building. This

reflected a more general feeling that a new building should be 'environmentally friendly', taking up limited space on the ground and building upwards. Participants were also anxious to know what would happen to the current building if St Luke's was to move elsewhere or build new premises. It was felt to be important that the building remained 'for the community' and did not become private housing. Communication about what would happen to the current building if St Luke's were to move sites is clearly important to the local community and may therefore play an important role in helping St Luke's to engage both current and potential users in a new centre.

The location of local services was key to participants' reports of how and why they used services other than St Luke's (see previous chapter). It was similarly salient for discussions about the location of a new St Luke's centre with issues concerning personal safety and proximity raised. The location of the current St Luke's centre was felt to be safe and there was concern among the Bangladeshi group that a new centre might be located in a less racially tolerant or more 'anti-social' area. Less safe areas were perceived to lie beyond Farringdon Road. Other groups were keen to mark the area within which a new St Luke's should be located - between the boundaries of Goswell Road, Old Street, Clerkenwell Road and City Road. It was felt that a new centre should sit within these boundaries if it were to remain 'local' to current users and therefore be favoured over other local community services. Younger participants felt that their parents, and the parents of younger children, would be concerned if they needed to travel far to reach the new centre. The implication in all these views is that such concerns may act as a barrier to current and potential users accessing a new St Luke's centre.

3.3 Services and activities

A notable feature of discussions about the offer from a new St Luke's centre was participants' tendency to focus on ways of extending or building capacity into the services already offered. This reflects the value placed on St Luke's by its current users (as described in the previous chapter). Older people were keen that they were offered more day trips and it was identified that art classes would benefit from greater capacity to accommodate more people. They were also keen for dance classes teaching basic dance steps – 'from the beginning' – for those who felt they were not sufficiently experienced to join the current dance sessions. Other participants suggested extending the current young person's drama group to all and putting on an annual pantomime. The free transport service was also lauded and it was suggested that extending this would make St Luke's accessible to a larger group of people. Participants in the group discussions with older people queried the current eligibility requirements for the free transport service and suggested that restricting its use to those most in need would make the service more efficient. The consultation found that lunches are a very popular part of the St Luke's current offer and all groups hoped these would continue. However, different groups suggested that there could be better choice in the options served: for example the older people groups asked for more traditional British food, such as roast dinners, and Bangladeshi group participants requested Halal and vegetarian options. Other participants thought that a Sunday lunch offer might encourage use of the new centre were it to open at weekends.

An extension of the current lunch offer and the computer facilities to form a 'community café' was a consistent suggestion from different participant groups. This was conceived of as a cyber-café that would emulate local coffee shops and could become a meeting place for different community groups, including people working in the local area during the day. It was also felt that such a space could successfully integrate younger and older centre users, both of whom currently use the computer facilities at the current centre.

As well as extending the existing and valued St Luke's offer, participants and respondents to the consultation suggested a wide variety of other possible services and activities that could be

provided. New leisure activities included music evenings and concerts, film showings, games evenings with board games and Bridge, and Bridge lessons. Suggestions were also made for themed evenings, with a focus on, for example, music and food from different cultures. A number of new classes were suggested: archery, fencing, creative writing, sewing, and alternative therapies. Family activities such as bring and buy sales, family day trips and family cookery classes were also suggested.

Suggested exercise and fitness activities included gym facilities. Older people felt these could usefully be geared towards the older age group and include access to a personal trainer. Other participants noted a wealth of similar local provision and suggested that St Luke's should join forces with a local gym such as Ironmonger Row and offer discounted membership. Other 'wish list' suggestions were for access to a swimming pool – either owned by St Luke's or located elsewhere with 'membership' for St Luke's users – and the provision of new walking or rambling groups. This was particularly appealing to some participants who noted that it could be offered at low cost or even free of charge.

In addition to this range of new and extended services for all St Luke's users, participant groups also identified a desire for services that were aimed at specific community groups. These were variously identified by the potential user group itself and by one local group on behalf of another. Older people, including participants in an all-female older persons group discussion, identified an extensive range of activities designed to attract more older men to the centre: darts, whist drives, snooker, cards, draughts, indoor bowling, outdoor bowls, cricket, football, racing, a cycling club, and a beer brewing club. Other suggestions to appeal to the male contingent were for a specific men's club and for the centre bar to be re-opened. Older people highlighted that an activity, such as dominoes or another game, specifically aimed at users of St Luke's who are less mobile or mentally alert would also be welcomed. There was criticism of the current lack of activities for these groups and it was suggested that they currently only ate lunch and watched television at the centre.

Younger people were another group identified as requiring new or different provision from a new St Luke's centre. Suggestions centred on facilities and activities for young people aged 16 and over and included information on careers, compiling a CV, housing, sexual health and general support and advice. Hoped-for leisure activities among younger people themselves included table tennis, indoor rowing and hairdressing. It was also suggested that St Luke's could organise football games at the local football pitches so that the cost of hiring the facilities – currently felt to be prohibitive for some - could be shared between more young people. For children, a homework club and tuck shop open after school were favoured.

A further set of activities and services were identified for and by respondents to the consultation from ethnic minority groups. Bangladeshi participants revealed a desire for activities limited to a single sex group, particularly female-only activities. They also lamented the loss of a former female Asian member of staff at St Luke's whom they felt encouraged them to attend classes offered at the centre and suggested that a new centre could consider employing staff with different cultural backgrounds. Respondents from different ethnic minority groups suggested that St Luke's should offer help with citizenship tests and ESOL classes, and the possibility of offering opportunities for English conversation was suggested by participants in the group discussion with older people.

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the consultation had their own views about the services a new St Luke's centre should offer. This group felt that they had a good understanding of the current gaps in local service provision and were keen that a different or extended offer from St Luke's complemented other services and did not duplicate them. Some of the suggestions to fill these

identified gaps were family-orientated and included hosting family and parenting support programmes, and health services such as GP surgeries and baby clinics. Encouraging other local services or groups to use the centre or deliver services from it was also suggested. Examples given were services delivered by the local PCT or local authority, for example housing advice, or leisure services such as exercise classes from local gym instructors. It was felt that by hosting services such as these, St Luke's would become more widely known in the local community. The provision of adult education services, in particular aimed at young adults, was also mentioned by some stakeholders. An opportunity for St Luke's to provide accredited courses in numeracy, literacy, IT, first aid and manual handling in an environment unlike school or other education establishments was identified. This gap was not echoed by local community respondents although the possibility that St Luke's could offer first aid and health and safety courses more generally was mentioned.

It is interesting note that different stakeholders, St Luke's users and non-users perceived different gaps in provision across local services. This points towards a possible need for a local services 'audit' – this could inform not only the development of a new or extended St Luke's offer, but would ensure St Luke's meets its aim of building capacity in local services by augmenting current provision and avoiding duplication. There did appear to be agreement among stakeholders that an existing gap that St Luke's could usefully work towards filling was the provision of services that brought together different community groups – and this echoes the views of group discussion participants presented above. Stakeholders noted the challenges this posed but identified that a number of funding sources existed that were reserved for such initiatives and for which St Luke's might be eligible.

3.4 Appealing to new users

Participants' suggestions for a new St Luke's centre were aimed not only at existing users but also at encouraging new users to access the centre. As well as tackling issues related to the marketing of services to new users, the building design and range of activities and services to encourage use of the centre by a wider group of local people, participants had ideas about the way in which St Luke's operated that they felt would appeal to a broader range of people. The centre's current opening hours were felt to limit its use to those not in employment or those working part time or shifts. It was suggested that if a new centre were to open later, this might encourage more people of working age and with daytime work commitments to use the centre. Weekend opening was also mooted as an appealing option. Older people who felt they would not make use of evening opening were enthusiastic about weekend film showings, Sunday lunch and opportunities to socialise on Saturdays and Sundays.

Participants' reactions to the idea of a new St Luke's centre were very focused on ensuring its accessibility and appeal to both current and new users. While this posed challenges for marketing the centre, as well as its physical layout and offer, participants were generally positive about St Luke's being able to achieve this. It was felt that only those people who have used the centre for many years – predominantly older people – were likely to feel negatively about a new centre and this was attributed to a general dislike of change. This focus on the broad appeal of St Luke's also appeared to be related to older users' feelings about recent changes to the current centre, in particular opening up its services to a much broader range of local groups – some older users who participated in the group discussions felt that their services were threatened by this change. This points towards a need for St Luke's to work hard to continue to engage with these current users in the planning for and transition to a new centre. Local residents, and particularly non-users, felt to be 'apathetic' to St Luke's and a new centre, were also identified as a group to which a new St Luke's centre would need to be 'sold'. It was suggested that St Luke's would need to demonstrate very clearly how the evidence gathered from this consultation was being considered to ensure local

residents felt that plans for the new centre reflected their views and needs. Such transparency was felt to be key in encouraging use of a new St Luke's centre.

4 Key messages from the consultation

This chapter draws together those messages from the consultation that have most salience for discussions about the future of St Luke's. There are broadly three key messages for consideration. First, there is a strong commitment to a community centre in the St Luke's area. Second, alongside this commitment is an acknowledgement that delivering a new St Luke's poses two significant challenges: these are focused on the difficulty of providing a centre that is all things to all people, and that can continue to meet the needs of its current users and appeal to a broader population. Finally, it is worth noting the role of the consultation itself in the development of a new centre: these findings represent only one stage of what needs to be a continuing conversation with the local community.

It is clear from the consultation so far that the local community supports and values having a community centre that acts as a focal point. For some parts of the community, St Luke's already meets this brief; for others, it has a way to go and this report highlights those aspects that are felt to be in need of attention. St Luke's was established as a service for older members of the community and is seen to currently serve this function well. It now strives to serve the whole community however the consultation indicates that it has some distance to travel before this is recognised by the community and can become a reality. Before St Luke's can achieve its mission to serve the whole community, it may want to consider undertaking a review of its purpose as a charity and centre and of the way that it communicates this purpose. The consultation indicated that people can be unsure just what St Luke's is aiming to achieve and who it is designed to serve. The creation of a new mission statement or 'strap-line' for St Luke's may help to provide users with a clearer identity to buy in to. This new purpose could then be widely communicated to users and the community as part of a new, clearer marketing strategy.

There are two interlinked challenges to achieving the goal of a community centre that is genuinely for everyone. The first is creating a St Luke's that appeals to a community that is very diverse in all respects and which has a range of requirements from a community centre. It is not a realistic proposition that St Luke's can respond to all the community's needs. Instead there is perhaps a role for St Luke's to provide a limited number of services but also to act as a true community 'hub' which not only provides a broad range of services but is a gateway to other local services, pointing residents in the right direction for other services in the borough or even liaising with other services on residents' behalf. To perform this role effectively St Luke's would need access to a clear, comprehensive list of existing services and provision. The research undertaken as part of this consultation indicates that this does not currently exist. Having this information would allow St Luke's to identify gaps in current provision where it could most usefully focus its resources as well as ensuring that residents are effectively signposted to other services in the area. This unique role would not only potentially place St Luke's at the heart of the community but help to ensure that the full potential of other services in the area is exploited.

The second, related, challenge is to successfully create a new centre that attracts a wider population while also retaining the support of existing users. As we have outlined, there is some reticence among older users in particular about the idea of a centre that regularly hosts diverse populations. One of the potential solutions to this tension is exploring how the space within a new centre might be used and giving consideration to the degree of integration that might happen between different user groups. To ensure that St Luke's keeps its existing users, it will also need to consider how a new centre retains the familiarity that so many current users appreciate. This goes beyond any physical design or provision of services and so is hard to capture. However, giving

current users a role in redesigning the centre could help to ensure the continuation of the valued aspects of St Luke's.

The findings presented in this report may help to guide St Luke's as it takes its next steps towards a new centre. As well as considering these views and incorporating them into a new strategy, it is important that St Luke's demonstrates clearly and transparently how these findings are translating into a new direction. Part of this is communicating plans for the current premises to the community. This will help to ensure that current and potential users remain engaged with and supportive of future decisions about the new centre. The consultation to date is part of a range of communication activities that need to take place between St Luke's and the local community before a new centre is established. To ensure that St Luke's takes its current users with it as it moves in a new direction, it will be important to continue the conversations that this consultation process has started and communicate the results of those conversations as widely as possible.

Appendix A List of stakeholder interviews

Name	Role/Job title
Jean Dolphin	SLPT Trustee (chair of the board of trustees)
John Garces	Timebank manager
Sadia Ahmed	Premises and facilities manger – St Luke's
Keren Wiltshire	Centre Manager
Melanie Aust	Development Manager – Three Corners
Nicole Johnson	Youth Projects manager for EC1
Paul Selby	Area Action Plan lead officer (Islington Council)
David Allen	Vicar of St Clement's church and St Luke's trustee
Jack Gould	SLPT trustee
Neil Best, John Hitchin and Claire Demoures - Cunin	EC1 New Deal for Communities

Appendix B Group discussion topic guide

St Luke's Parochial Trust Community Consultation

Research objectives

1. To understand how people currently do and don't use St Luke's Centre
2. To understand what people would want from a centre in a new site
3. To understand the barriers and enablers to people using the current and new centre

Introduction

Aim: to introduce NatCen, consultation and explain the group discussion process.

Introduction to researcher and NatCen

- Research on behalf of St Luke's to find out what people in the area think of St Luke's centre and might want from it in the future
- Provide detail about the context of the consultation – St Luke's is thinking of changing or rebuilding the centre over the next few years and wants to ensure that the new centre meets the needs of local people as much as possible.
- What people tell us they want will be passed to St Luke's but we can't guarantee that all of it will happen
- Feedback from the study – there will be a feedback meeting in November 2009
- Process of sampling and recruitment
- Explain confidentiality and anonymity
- Explain recording, length (1.5 hours) and nature of discussion, outputs/reporting and data storage issues.
- Check whether they have any questions
- Check that they are happy and turn on recorder

For those groups who are familiar with St Luke's

Use of the current centre

- What do they use it for?
- What does that give them?
- How does it meet their needs?
- Could it be improved/better meet their needs?
- What services used?
- What do they know about current services/activities?
- How do they find out about what St Luke's has to offer?

Likes and dislikes

- What's good about the centre?
- What's not so good about the centre?
- What's missing from the centre?
- How could it better meet your needs? Opening hours? Cost?

Use of other services in the area

- What else do they use?
- Why?
- How did they hear about them?
- Could St Luke's offer it?

The new centre

- Physical layout?
- Services?
- Activities?
- How can the new centre keep the good will of current users?
- How could it encourage new users?
- What if the centre catered for other religions? Problems?

Anything else

- What else about:
 - The centre
 - The community
 - Thoughts, questions, concerns.

For those groups who are not familiar with St Luke's:

Knowledge of St Luke's

- Had they heard of it? How
- Ever used it? For what?
- Thoughts on it?
- What services do they think it offers *prompt with list – which had they heard of?*
- Use of other community resources in the area?
- How did they hear of them?
- What did they think?

Use of a new centre

- What would tempt them?
- Physicality?
- Services?
- Activities
- Food?
- Room hire?
- Opening hours?
- Charges?
- What if the centre was also used for different religions? Challenges?

Communicating a new centre

- How could we best tell people about it?
- Specific things to say?
- Types of communication?

Barriers to using new centre

- What might stop people from using the centre? Why?
- How can barriers be overcome?

Anything else you would like to add?

Next steps for users and non users

- Any other areas of importance to cover
- Any questions now for research team
- Reassure confidentiality
- Thank them for their time. Tell them that they are welcome to contact members of the research team to ask questions at a later date if they wish.
- Take details if they want to be informed of second public meeting.
- Hand out support leaflet.

Appendix C Proforma

Give us your views on St Luke's!

We would be very grateful if you would take the time to answer some brief questions about St Luke's community centre.

We are the National Centre for Social Research - an independent research company who is carrying out research with the people in this area to find out what you think of St Luke's and what you would want from the community centre in the future.

All information you provide will be strictly confidential. No individuals will be identified in any report we write for St Luke's.

About you

1) Where do you live?

- Within the EC1 postcode area
- Elsewhere in Islington (e.g. postcode N1)
- Elsewhere in London (e.g. Hackney)
- Outside of London

2) How old are you?

- 16-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46- 55
- 56- 65
- 66-75
- 76+

3) Do you have children?

- Yes
- No

3a) If yes, how old are they?

4) How often would you say that you visit St Luke's community centre?

- Never - this is the first time
- Sometimes - once or twice a year
- Occasionally - several times a year
- Frequently - every month or more
- Other (please write in how often)

Now please tell us your thoughts about St Luke's community centre...

5) In your own words, please tell us what you think about the facilities, activities and services offered at St Luke's Centre?

6) What else would you like to see offered at St Luke's centre?

7) If St Luke's was to move to a new centre, what should that look like and what services should it offer?

8) What would make you want to use the centre more?

9) Is there anything else about St Luke's or your relationship with it that you would like to tell us?

Appendix D Breakdown of respondents to proforma

(Note this include respondents to the proforma questionnaire only and excludes group discussion participants – see Chapter 1 for breakdown of group discussion participants)

Characteristic		Number of respondents
Age	16-25	0
	26-35	10
	36-45	8
	46-55	10
	56-65	5
	66-75	16
	76+	23
	Not given	1
Gender	Male	16
	Female	50
	Not given	7
Use of centre	Users	54
	Non-users	19
Total number of respondents		73

