

Disadvantaged and Vulnerable People

Seeing behind Guildford's image of affluence

It is clear from the public consultation that people on low incomes in Guildford are at a greater disadvantage because of the high cost of essentials like housing, while some young people and families, people with disabilities, homeless people and older people face specific disadvantage.

The issues that you raised include:

- Public services and voluntary agencies to work together to tackle social exclusion.
- Services to be both accessible across the whole borough and targeted at disadvantaged groups and individuals.
- Local rather than centralised services and facilities.
- Status of older people to be raised in the community.
- Sheltered and residential homes to be accessible to all, not just council or social housing tenants.
- An holistic approach to young people's needs, covering culture, housing, education, training, employment and meeting places.

The action plan

Crucial to any attempt to tackle social exclusion and increase accessibility of services is a spirit of cooperation and shared goals, a principle enshrined in the Community Plan.

The Guildford and Waverley Primary Care Trust (PCT), Guildford Borough Council (GBC), Surrey County Council (SCC) and voluntary groups are all working together to improve services for older and disabled people, as well as vulnerable children and families, through a large number of projects and initiatives.

- GBC has developed an Anti Poverty Strategy.
- SCC has a Self Reliance programme in North Guildford, the first in the county, that works with local people and agencies in the Building Bridges Partnership.
- The PCT is committed to reducing health inequalities, mainly focusing on reducing infant mortality, increasing life expectancy and reducing teenage pregnancies.
- The PCT and SCC are working together to improve opportunities for vulnerable children to lead healthier lives.
- SCC has recently committed more social care resources to improve services for the most vulnerable people.
- The PCT and SCC are working to produce a Local Delivery Plan for Health and Social Care services which should lead to even greater efforts to join up service planning and delivery.
- The health and social care needs of Ash are being given specific attention by all the agencies.
- A new Connexions Service has been created under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to help all young people aged 13-19 years to achieve their potential and make a successful transition to adulthood. The service will offer integrated advice and support through a network of personal advisers to every young person and it will involve a range of partners. It is targeting support to the most vulnerable, such as people in or leaving care; teenage parents; young carers; young people with disabilities and young people in rural areas.

Accessibility for everyone

Through these and other partnerships, the Community Plan aims to make services accessible to everyone throughout the borough, regardless of age, income group or disability.

- The Safer Guildford Partnership has set up a multi-agency group looking at, among other things, improving and finding 'Safe Places' for Young People. Another project group, targeting vulnerable young people, aims at reducing the number of young people becoming both victims and offenders.
- Meals on wheels and community alarms system help support older people in their homes.
- Free access is provided to parks, open spaces, Guildford Museum and Guildford House Gallery and free access or concessionary pricing is available for a wide range of activities, e.g. via Active Card, Student Cards and GP Referral Scheme.
- Subsidised transport is available to Spectrum.
- 400 premises have been made aware by the Guildford Disability Access Group of access requirements under the Disability Discriminations Act 2004.
- Public agencies are coordinating services and sharing databases.
- The Healthy Living Programme works with the communities in Westborough and Stoke and with vulnerable people in the town centre.
- A health drop-in clinic operates each lunchtime at Leapale Road.
- Integrated care teams for older people aim to reduce inappropriate hospital admission and speed up hospital discharge.
- Surrey County Council's (SCC) Self Reliance Programme in North Guildford is developing a range of community learning projects in local schools.
- Guildford Borough Council's (GBC) Cultural Strategy Action Plan addresses a range of issues for disadvantaged people.
- Refuges have been established across Surrey for women and their children affected by domestic violence.
- SCC youth workers in local community teams are operating successfully in partnership with other organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- The new Youth Development Service was launched in September 2002 to set up a local advisory forum in Guildford.

Further initiatives include:

- SCC is committing additional funding from April 2003 to provide more care for older people at home, in the community or through residential places. It will offer more breaks for carers; more support for people with learning and physical disabilities including school leavers. The aim is to promote greater independence so that people can choose and manage their support through for example, direct payments; access to lifelong learning; greater and more flexible employment opportunities.
- SCC will improve services to help vulnerable families to stay together; to help children with disabilities live with their families and to recruit more foster carers to avoid placing children in residential care.
- Expansion of the single assessment process for older people (where SCC, GBC and PCT carry out joint assessments) to all parts of the borough.
- SCC is increasing education funding, with more money for every school place; a new science laboratory for Guildford County School and investment in facilities for children with special needs, such as re-building Pond Meadow School.
- The Diocese and SCC have recently announced the relaunch of Bishop Reindorp School as Christ College from September 2003.
- The second phase of Guildford Children's Centre will open from September 2003.
- The multi-agency Connexions initiative is to be aligned with the Youth Development Service: The Ash Youth Centre is proposed as a Connexions Centre with an adviser and a Connexions website is to be developed.
- The new SCC Guildford Local Committee to provide an umbrella for more multi-agency services for vulnerable people locally.
- SCC to ensure Pathway Plans for teenagers leaving care.
- Plans for arts based anti-drug schemes.
- Extension of the FISH (Fun in the Summer Holidays) scheme from two to three weeks and provision of more summer play schemes for younger children.
- Wazzup Magazine and Workshops for young people to be developed.
- Disability Network GU1 1EX set up by GBC's Access Officer and Guildford Council for Voluntary Service to be developed.
- Cultural Strategy Action Plan to go ahead.
- Use of the Adult Education Institute in Sydenham Road by Outreach Groups from Lockwood Centre to be developed.
- Promotion of respite care for carers via Guildford and Waverley Crossroads Care.
- Development of a Domestic Violence Outreach Service to women and children affected by Domestic Violence.

