

Changecheck Impact Survey Baseline Results



REPORT

For



Report compiled by:
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August 2013

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1. Executive Summary

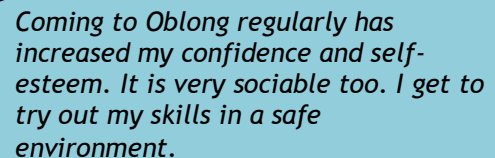
Oblong is an organisation which holds extremely strong values around effecting change in their community by responding to people's needs, skills and ideas.

The last two years have been extremely demanding on the organisation's modest resources, to both deliver their programmes of work and organise around taking on the management of Woodhouse Community Centre on behalf of the community.

However, this impact survey shows how significant an impact the organisation has had and is having on the community they are serving, from the various points of views of all who have entered in direct contact with Oblong, and even those who do so indirectly.

The key findings were that four of the five impact categories most dear to Oblong were rated as a major/medium impact overall.

1. Education and lifelong learning
2. Culture and leisure
3. Community cohesion and involvement
4. Health and social wellbeing
5. Environment



Coming to Oblong regularly has increased my confidence and self-esteem. It is very sociable too. I get to try out my skills in a safe environment.

The impact on economic wellbeing is not rated as high as Oblong had guessed; but the impact on the environment is rated higher than expected, even though Oblong has hardly any resources to cover either environmental or economic work.

The general sense of positivity towards the organisation's values, and the importance of its work were evident throughout. "Friendly", "local", and "community" were the words most stated in this survey.

Recommendations for the future include marketing Oblong's activities better as a wide majority of community members surveyed knew nothing or very little about Oblong; supporting people into jobs; and providing more activities for young people. The key priority for the area was around community safety.

The high response rate makes this survey a truly useful and indicative tool to take a snapshot in time about the organisation's overall social, economic and environmental impact.

2. Introduction

Locality was commissioned by Oblong to undertake a baseline Changecheck methodology survey of their impact, as part of their Community Builders capital investment from the Social Investment Business.

The purpose is to identify strengths & weaknesses, track Oblong's impact over time, but also to use findings in reports to funders and stakeholders.

3. Aims

In the planning of this Impact survey, Locality asked Oblong to state what their aims as an organisation were, and what they want to know about their impact.

Organisation: to create active and flourishing communities

- Enabler, confidence builder, bridge
- Sign-poster for people with ideas
- Helping people most far from the job market, long journey (3-4y)
- Led by volunteers, all members are engaged
- Some 'service users' but they are encouraged to volunteer
- Interventionist in training community activists (Take part Take action, Active Citizens, Community Transformers), smaller groups

How do you know you achieve your aims?

- Good reputation, word of mouth
- Funding monitoring
- In-depth and qualitative survey
- Consultation prior to Community Builders bid
- Physical things (garden, asset transfer of community centre)

What do you want to know about your impact?

- Approachability (low marketing)
- Demonstrate need to other organisations
- Find out what people need (youth activities, community safety)
- How we are perceived by other agencies who refer people to us
- Moving towards a more targeted review of roles

4. Process / Methodology

Process

Oblong and Locality devised 4 different surveys, and organised volunteers to fill in surveys over the months of June/July 2013, after they had been managing Woodhouse Community Centre for around 18 months.

A total of **375** surveys were returned, which is an exceptionally high amount for this type of exercise:

Tenants/Group leaders	12
Stakeholders	19
Activity Users	100
Members of the Community	244

These surveys were analysed in July 2013 by Locality, who have developed the Changecheck methodology for impact measurement, specifically for community anchor organisations like Oblong.

Methodology

These surveys are a mix of traditional consultation surveys, and key Changecheck measures as follows:

Audit commission - 9 areas of community well being

(Priorities in decreasing order, identified by Oblong)

1. Health and social well-being
2. Community cohesion and involvement
3. Education and life long learning
4. Economic wellbeing
5. Culture and leisure
6. Environment
7. Community safety
8. Housing
9. Transport and access

Community Alliance - characteristics of a community anchor organisation

(Priorities in decreasing order, identified by Oblong)

1. a building for community space
2. a platform for community development
3. a vehicle for local voices to be heard
4. a forum for communities
5. a focus for services and activities
6. a means of promoting enterprise
7. a bridge between communities and the state
8. a home for the community sector

5. Key Results

These have been analysed as per the four different categories which were identified at the planning meeting.

Tenants/Group leaders

12 Tenants/Groups were surveyed, most from the VCS sector, and 33% using the centre at least once a week, 17% every weekday, and 17% every other day.

The comments below are what Tenants thought Oblong's best qualities were; the bigger the words being the comments which were more prevalent overall.



Respondents rated the reasons why they chose Oblong in different orders of importance, but the responses averaged out over all responses, without a clear “most important” reason.

7 out of 10 who responded said they also used other community centres in nearby postcodes (LS7 and LS8) for their activities.

Oblong decided to change the labelling of their top criteria for a community anchor;

1. From “a building for community space” to “Providing somewhere with good facilities for groups to meet”. This criteria also scored highest in this survey, with 47% of responses.
2. From “a platform for community development” to “Somewhere for people to learn skills and build links to make a difference in the community”. This criterion however scored joint 5th/6th in this survey.

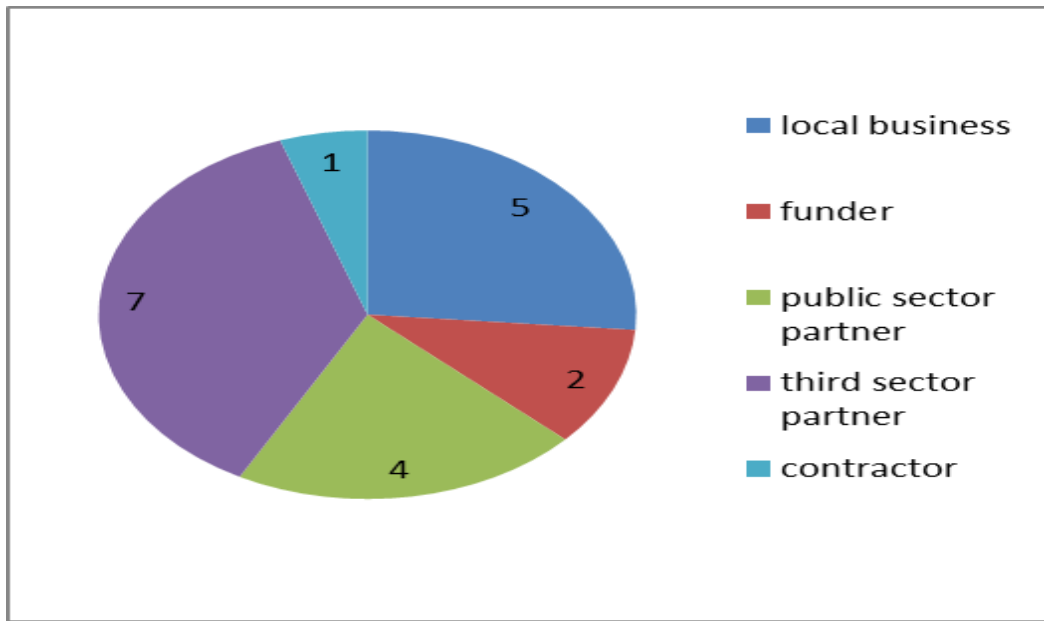
“Somewhere to run activities and services” scored 2nd amongst the respondents, with 37% scoring it as high/medium impact; followed by “a vehicle for local voices to be heard” and “a home for the voluntary sector”.

Oblong's highest impact on community wellbeing was felt to be in **Health & social wellbeing**, and **Education and lifelong learning**, with 33% of respondents each rating them as a major impact; then second came Community cohesion & involvement, followed by Culture & Leisure. Economic wellbeing however scored amongst the lowest visible impact overall.

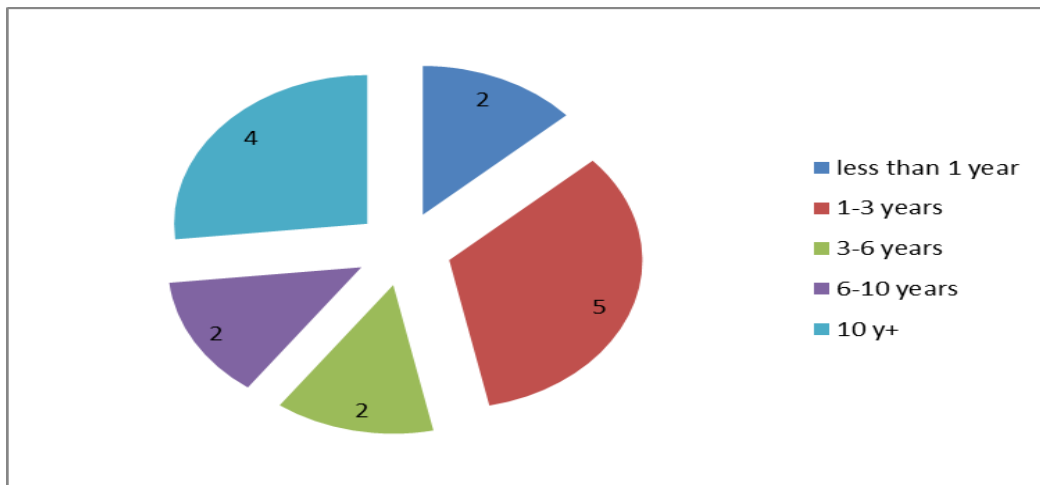
Tenants and groups seemed to cater for widespread age and ethnic groups; with, of those sampled, a combined number of 128 activity users/week. The centre has an average usage of between 300 and 500 activity users per week.

Stakeholders

19 stakeholders responded to the survey, with a good spread of sectors:



This is how long the various stakeholders had a relationship with Oblong for, out of which 5 had only known Oblong since they took on the management of Woodhouse Community Centre.



The vast majority of these stakeholders rated their relationship with Oblong as above average, with only 1 below average, and 3 not responding (local businesses which did not know Oblong well enough, or not at all). The average rating was **6.5/10**.

I like Oblong. Strong values-led organisation which sticks to principles and is out to change the world for the better in a small and manageable way.

When asked about the main purpose they thought Oblong had, **59%** across the different sectors included “support, volunteering, opportunities, empowerment, skills, local area”, in a surprisingly coherent way to what Oblong would describe as its main purpose. Local businesses were those who least knew Oblong’s purpose.

Stakeholders thought Oblong’s highest impact was on the **Environment**, followed by **Education & lifelong learning**, then **Culture & Leisure**. Community involvement only rated 4th; Health & social wellbeing 5th; at odds with Oblong’s own ratings.

Providing services and resources for the community were the highest rated impact on the community as a community anchor organisation.

33% of respondents thought Oblong could improve its effectiveness by developing “**Higher profile and visibility, marketing (including digital groups)**”.

Overall, this is what Stakeholders thought Oblong’s best qualities were; the bigger the words being the comments which were more prevalent overall.



Fantastic organisation with the space to let people get involved in a way they feel comfortable with. Great facilities, good engagement.

Activity users

100 surveys were received from individuals using Oblong's centre, and benefiting from Oblong's activities.

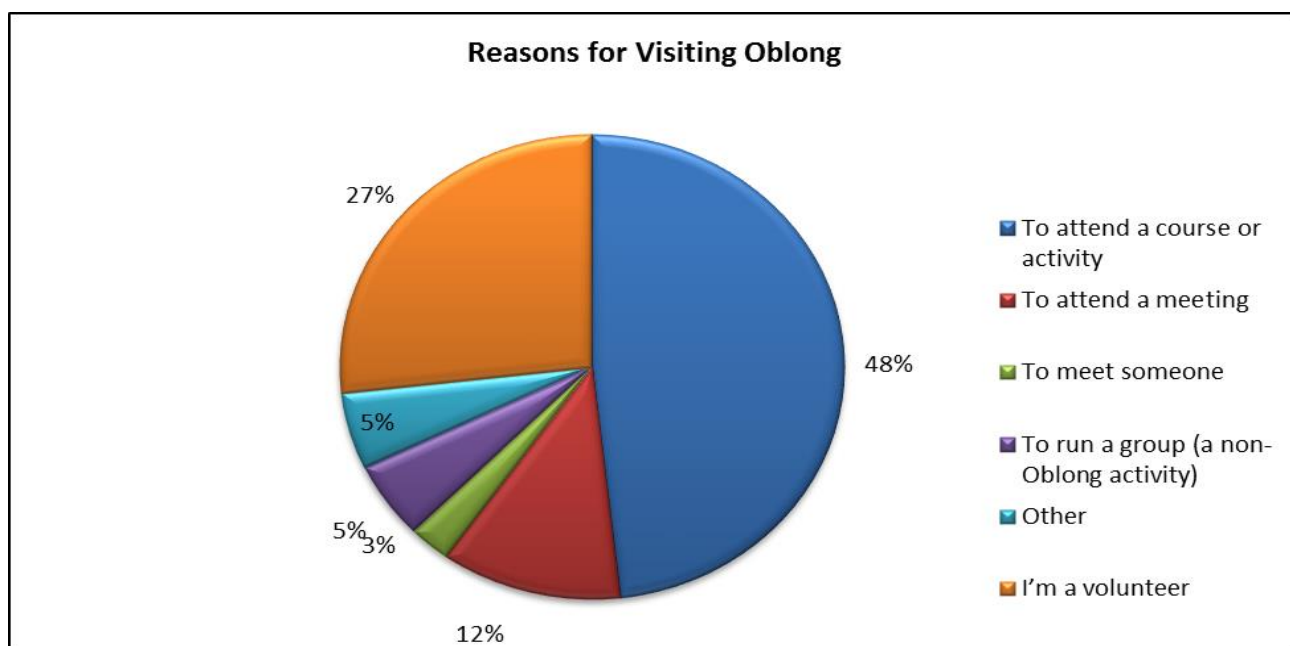
Only 57% of users were aware that Oblong ran Woodhouse Community Centre.

Most respondents (73%) were using Oblong or the centre for a single reason, such as a class, a media activity, a language lesson, a meeting, or a volunteering placement.

A majority of activity users knew Oblong at least since the asset transfer (52%), with 24% knowing Oblong for over 3 years. 30% of respondents stated (a good) location as the main reason why they visited.

The activities provided are obviously regular for the vast majority: 69% visit the centre at least once a week; and 79% stated Oblong as the only community centre they attend; making it a valuable resource.

It keeps me involved, busy, enhances my local community, makes me smile, improves my confidence and self-esteem, keeps me healthy and happy with fresh veg!



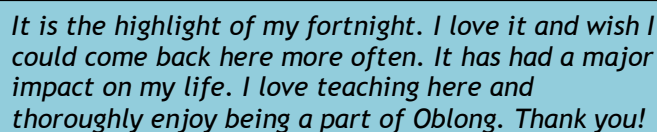
Just under a quarter of those using Oblong's activities 23% were also volunteers, which demonstrated the organisation's openness towards volunteering, but also the effective empowerment and engagement evidenced through Oblong's activities.

Oblong's impact was felt highest in the Education & lifelong learning category, with 47% stating a major difference in their life as a result of the classes and activities.

I am learning and contributing, which is helping me to develop my skills. So it is with Oblong that I am able to do this.

Out of Oblong's key priorities for impact, only 3 also featured in the activity users' ratings: Health & social wellbeing, Community cohesion, and Culture & leisure; while **Economic wellbeing** got the highest score for **little or no impact**.

Nearly half of respondents added some very warming comments about the visible difference Oblong made to them; with heartfelt words:



It is the highlight of my fortnight. I love it and wish I could come back here more often. It has had a major impact on my life. I love teaching here and thoroughly enjoy being a part of Oblong. Thank you!

When asked what could be improved at Oblong, a variety of suggestions were made, with 4 individuals stating the creation of a café, but conversely 4 advising **not to change a thing!**

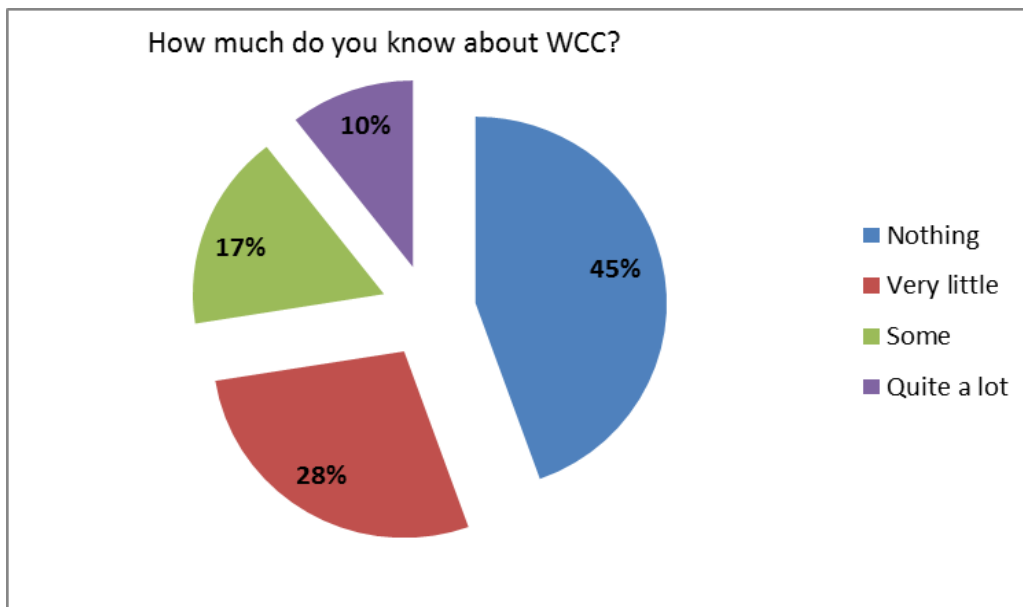
More **females (59%)** responded to the survey; age groups were evenly represented; 20 nationalities were featured with **49%** stating **White British/British**.

30% of activity users were from Woodhouse or LS6 but **45%** where from **elsewhere in Leeds**; which shows that Oblong offers specialist activities and has a wide catchment area.

Community

244 surveys were conducted members of the community, outside of Oblong's regular activities/centre.

A vast majority (73%) knew **nothing or very little** about Woodhouse Community Centre; those who were fairly knowledgeable about the centre mostly did not come to it, but those who were very knowledgeable about it came to the centre. So it is fair to say that **the more people used the centre, the more they knew about Oblong the organisation**. Managing the centre seems to help Oblong's visibility in the community.



68% of respondents who knew about the centre ("some" or "quite a lot") did not use any other community centres.

Good for the local area, heard good things.

Those familiar with the Centre stated with overwhelming majority (81%) that Oblong had a **significant impact** (medium or major) on the local area. Interestingly, this included members of the community who were not using Oblong's services themselves, but knew about Oblong via leaflets, posters, friends, or family.

68 members of the community rated Oblong's impact in this way:

1. **Environment** (39% major impact, 77% medium or major impact). The "beautiful gardens" were a feature of many comments
2. **Culture & Leisure** (48% medium impact, 75% medium or major impact)
3. **Community Cohesion** (74% medium or major impact)
4. **Education & lifelong learning** (73% medium or major impact)

Health & Social Wellbeing came next, with 66% rating it a medium or major impact, but less than half (42%) thought Oblong had a medium or major impact on **Economic wellbeing**, which was on Oblong's top 5 priorities.

35% stated Oblong had little or no impact on Community safety (despite comments later about the centre feeling safe), and over half of respondents said they did not know about Oblong's impact on Economic wellbeing, Housing, or Transport & access.

Oblong held a place dear in the hearts of people interviewed.

They provide services that enrich my life such as clothing exchange, and give opportunities to work with volunteers and exhibit my art, and collaborate with the organisation.

When asked what could be improved, there were some suggestions from members of the community, mainly around improving publicity and advertising, but the **majority** of respondents said “**nothing**”; showing Oblong is doing a great job already.

The centre is now open and accessible, unlike when the Council ran it. It's essential to any true community.

Overall, the rating for the top 4 priorities for the area, as voted by 173 members of the community was:

1. Lowering of crime and making the area safer
2. People having a say about local issues
3. Improvement of the area environmentally - clean, green space, recycling facilities, renewable
4. Provision of training courses and opportunities to learn new skills

It's a really good place to build community and it's not like other social centres where it can be a bit scary, it's very relaxed and a place where you immediately feel safe.

It is worth noting that those who knew nothing/little about Oblong rated them:

1. Lowering of crime and making the area safer
2. Improvement of the area environmentally - clean, green space, recycling facilities, renewable
3. Provision of training courses and opportunities to learn new skills

Those who knew something/quite a lot about Oblong rated them:

1. People having a say about local issues
2. Improvement of the area environmentally - clean, green space, recycling facilities, renewable
3. Lowering of crime and making the area safer

Out of 96 respondents who expressed ideas for what other provision Oblong could offer or facilitate, **23%** mentioned **activities for children/young people**, 5% foreign language courses, and 5% advice services similar to a CAB.

The 244 surveys showed an even spread in gender and age groups. 27 nationalities were represented, out of which **57%** stated **White/White British**.

Only **51%** of respondents lived in **Woodhouse or LS6**, with 20% living in LS5, and 25% further afield in Leeds.

21% of the respondents who knew little or nothing about Oblong gave their contact details to receive further information from Oblong, while **46%** of those who knew a fair amount about **Oblong agreed to be contacted later**. Through this survey, Oblong have gained new contact details for **69 members of the community**.

6. Conclusions

This is the average impact result across the **375 surveys**, and the 4 different respondents' categories: Tenants, Stakeholders, Activity users, and members of the Community.

This shows again that the impact on **economic wellbeing is not rated as high** as Oblong had guessed; but that the impact on the **environment is rated higher** than expected.

The order overall, taking into account those who "didn't know", gave a majority for impact in the order which follows:

1. Education and lifelong learning
2. Culture and leisure
3. Community cohesion and involvement
4. Health and social wellbeing
5. Environment

However, if only votes expressed are taken into account, it is clear that the **majority of people** surveyed felt that Oblong had a **significant impact** on all 9 categories; the order being slightly different, as shown in yellow below:

	Community wellbeing category	Major difference	Medium difference	Major/medium OVERALL	Major/medium VOTES EXPRESSED	Little or no difference	Don't know/NA
1	Community cohesion and involvement	29%	37%	66%	95%	3%	29%
2	Health and social wellbeing	32%	33%	65%	97%	2%	32%
3	Education and lifelong learning	44%	25%	69%	96%	3%	25%
4	Economic wellbeing	19%	28%	46%	80%	12%	42%
5	Culture and leisure	30%	37%	67%	90%	7%	24%
6	Community safety	11%	29%	39%	71%	16%	43%
7	Environment	33%	31%	65%	94%	4%	29%
8	Housing	7%	13%	20%	50%	19%	59%
9	Transport and access	7%	15%	23%	54%	19%	56%

This is a significant piece of evidence around the impact Oblong can directly claim for positive outcomes in people's lives, whether local or those who come into contact with Oblong via their activities.

7. Income and Resource Mapping

	Community wellbeing category	Major difference	Medium difference	Major/medium OVERALL	Little or no difference	Don't know/NA	RESOURCES
1	Community cohesion and involvement	29%	37%	66%	3%	29%	£:30k Funder:BLF/LTSB Vols:30
2	Health and social wellbeing	32%	33%	65%	2%	32%	£:18k Funder:Volition Vols:0
3	Education and lifelong learning	44%	25%	69%	3%	25%	£:57k Funder:BLF/LTSB Vols:80
4	Economic wellbeing	19%	28%	46%	12%	42%	none
5	Culture and leisure	30%	37%	67%	7%	24%	£:22.5k Funder:BLF Vols:16
6	Community safety	11%	29%	39%	16%	43%	none
7	Environment	33%	31%	65%	4%	29%	none
8	Housing	7%	13%	20%	19%	59%	none
9	Transport and access	7%	15%	23%	19%	56%	none

A quick mapping exercise against the resources immediately available to Oblong in comparison to the impact felt by the survey respondents reveals that:

- The impact on **Education & lifelong learning** was most proportionate to the resources available (highest)
- The impact on **Housing and Transport** was also most proportionate to the resources available (lowest)
- The impact on **Culture & leisure**, and **Community cohesion & involvement** was fairly proportionate to the resources available (lowest)
- The impact on the **Environment** however was rated disproportionately very high compared to the scarcity of corresponding resources

8. Recommendations & Future Steps

Throughout the survey, there was a clear mandate for Oblong around a few areas of development. Of course it is difficult to achieve results in all areas with modest resources. However, these could be picked up for further consideration:

a) Better Publicity/Advertising

Recommendations include:

- Using Media activities to support this work
- Engage local marketing firms on a pro-bono basis
- Develop more social media training for volunteers
- Using the new contact details gathered through this survey

b) More activities for young people

Recommendations include:

- Linking in with other organisations specialising in youth work to co-deliver work in the area
- Engaging more young people to set up youth groups in the area

c) Engaging with more people from the immediate local community

Recommendations include:

- Linking in with other local organisations to co-deliver awareness events in the area
- Delivering events in other buildings to Woodhouse Community Centre

d) Lowering of crime

Recommendations include:

- Developing programmes and activities with the local police force, who were very positive about Oblong's work in this survey
- Facilitating people's ideas on how to combat crime
- Develop housing projects to give a physical uplift to the area

e) Economic wellbeing

Recommendations include:

- Getting engaged with local support programmes via Community Learning or Job Centre funding
- Actively supporting people in linking their newly acquired skills and confidence into employment, perhaps at the end of each activity/course/programme

NB: Oblong's initial assessment of their impact on the Economic Wellbeing of the community was based on how volunteering has an impact through the progression on to training, education and employment. This discussion overemphasised it as a priority and feedback from the survey supports this conclusion.

9. Appendices

a) Survey Results/Data

See Excel Spread sheet A with all quantitative and qualitative results. (6 tabs at the bottom)

b) Contact Details/Data

See Excel Spread sheet B with all personal contact details given through the surveys.