

Perry's restaurant is used widely by the community and has grown as a business with a high quality product. Many members of the community have suggested that Perry's should be on the High Street or on the riverside with the other restaurants. This is the desire of the manager who reported that despite attempting to secure property in the town centre he has found estate agents to be unhelpful when informed that the property is for a

1.6 Perry's Caribbean Cuisine

Nearly all respondents indicated that they wanted to see changes at Central. Refurbishment and more activities and services were important. Other comments that were made were associated with better promotion of the centre once refurbishment has taken place. Reference to the reputation of the centre although made by few in the questionnaire data was an important factor in the interview data.

Most respondents to the survey felt that Central should become the African Caribbean centre in Reading largely because of its prime location, the need to have a place to socialise and because there is no other venue for African Caribbeans. However, a small number responded negatively to the question and almost half of this group suggested that a new building was needed.

The majority of respondents stated that Reading needs a centre for the African Caribbean community. Some suggested that the cultural needs of Africans and Caribbeans differ and there may be a need for two centres. Having a centre for socialising and to build community were important reasons given.

More males than females returned questionnaires and ranged in age from under 15 to over 51. Just under half the respondents were under the age of 24. The majority of respondents actually used the centre and Perry's cuisine was the most successful part of the centre. Most respondents stated that Central catered for their needs however many qualified this with a number of exceptions. High proportions of respondents expressed concern over facilities, the lack of activities and the impact of the loss of the PHL.

1.5 Findings

The most pressing needs expressed by the community are the renewal of the PBL, and a major refurbishment and restructuring of the current site to enable the space to better

1.9 Community Needs

The loss of the PBL has had a major impact on a number of voluntary and community groups who formerly used Central for their functions and fund raising. These groups are without an affordable venue that will allow them to benefit from the bar and kitchen takings. Currently they do not use Central for functions. Current uses of Central vary from those who drop into the centre for socialising, use the computer centre or purchase food from Perry's to those who use the centre on a regular basis as a venue for their clubs. There are a large number of potential users who need to be drawn into using the club but this can only be done when the centre is refurbished, and re-launched with a new and clear role in the community.

1.8 Users of the Centre

Despite the difficulties and perceptions of Central the community recognise that the centre has its strengths. Regardless of the negative views it continues to be a meeting point for members of the community who do have needs and feel that Central is meeting those needs. The challenge for the future of Central is to continue to meet those needs while moving forward to a point where the wider community feel comfortable enough to access the building, help to extend it and gain benefit from the positive activities there. importantly in the minds of the wider community.

Central will depend upon this reputation being changed not only in practice but more important because the community have commented on it as a key factor. The future of their perceptions may be unpleasant to consider or discuss nevertheless, they are may be historical but many respondents referred to it as a current problem. Although The reputation of Central is one that is known throughout the community. Some of it

1.7 Reputation

Caribbean restaurant. This report may need to be investigated further and if proven, addressed to ensure equality of opportunity for African Caribbean businesses.

The consensus from the community was that there should be a management committee that is representative of the users and user groups of Central. That it should be a visible committee that ensures that the community is kept informed of the business of the centre

1.13 Management Arrangements

In order for the community and Reading Borough Council to work together there will need to be a serious determination on the part of the council to engage more actively with the community and genuinely seek to repair the damage that has been done over the decades. Part of the healing process will involve the council having greater transparency and openness by ensuring that the community is kept informed of progress and developments by regularly communicating with the user groups, community and voluntary groups as well as communicating through existing Black forums.

A primary concern expressed by the community was the feeling that Reading Borough Council have largely ignored the needs of the Black community. The council needs to be confident that they are meeting their legal obligations and that they fulfil the key aims and objectives as set out in their Race Equality Scheme 2002-2005.

1.12 Reading Borough Council

can be proud of.

The community have expressed a need for a centre that has flexible space that can be used for a range of activities such as workshops, conferences, dances and fund raising functions, office space and meeting rooms. The possibility of Central being able to offer this type of accommodation will depend on whether the building itself can be extended. What is clear is that the community desire a modernised and refurbished centre that they

1.11 Accommodation Needs

Our mission is to build community through empowerment, engagement, and positive relationships which will encourage excellence and respect for diversity whilst meeting the needs of the African Caribbean and mixed heritage people of Reading.

1.10 Draft Mission Statement

serve the community and its need for a centre. This centre will provide a function/events venue, a safe and supportive, educational and achievement oriented place where culture is celebrated and the diverse needs of the community can be met.

- and kept up to date on progress and developments. The day to day management of the centre should be the responsibility of an experienced events/venue centre manager.
- ### 1.14 Conclusion
- To consult with a community with diverse experiences and views is challenging. The issues raised present a complex picture of conflicting views and opinions on the future of Central. What is important is that the community recognise that the only way forward is through compromise and understanding. By seeking the betterment of the whole community and laying aside personal wishes there is a real opportunity for the community to unite and build a centre that will meet all their needs.
- ### 1.15 Recommendations in Brief
- That the council seek to ensure that they are fulfilling their legal obligation in relation to Race Relations legislation for the African and Caribbean community.
 - That a representative management committee be appointed and empowered to manage the centre in its entirety.
 - The process of selecting a management committee should be transparent and open.
 - The manager and management committee seek to actively engage the community by meeting with representative groups in Reading and sharing the vision of a new Central with them.
 - The programme that is offered should meet the diverse needs of the community.
 - The PEL needs to be renewed as soon as the requirements are met and that the whole community should be aware of their obligations and take collective responsibility for ensuring there is no breach in the regulations.
 - There needs to be an investigation into the feasibility of extending the current site in order for the centre to better fulfil its function as a community centre. Once established that the centre be refurbished and redesigned to accommodate the needs of the community.
 - There should be investment of time and energy into the re-branding and promotion of Central. This should include a grand opening which has media

attention, representatives and dignitaries from the council, users and user groups and community and voluntary organisations.

2. Background

2.1 Introduction

This consultation was commissioned by Reading Borough Council to explore the views of the African Caribbean community on the future of Central Reading Youth Provision in London Street. The centre has offered a range of activities over the years and up until the previous two years was used by the African Caribbean community as a venue for functions and fund raising events. However, since the loss of its Public Entertainment License it has been used less frequently for such activities. It is regularly used by some sections of the community, who are often unemployed and need a place to congregate during the day. This seems to provide a sense of security and belonging for this group. Unfortunately, the centre has for a long time been stigmatised as a place that respectable community members would not wish to be associated with. The reputation it has is one of drugs, and violence. The majority of the community who use it tend to use the facility for accessing Perry's Caribbean Cuisine a restaurant selling Caribbean meals at reasonable cost.

Central seems to have lost its identity as a centre and needs re-clarification of its role within the community. The issues are whether it is to continue as a youth provision or to be re-branded as a Community centre that more fully meets the needs of the whole community. Furthermore, the issue of whether the building should continue to be used or a new site found for the community also needs addressing. This consultation aims to consult with a wide cross section of the community to establish their views on the way forward for Central.

2.2 Management Structure

Central Youth provision falls under the Directorate of Education and Community Services more specifically under the Children and Young People's Service (CHYPS) of the

In 2003, research was undertaken by the University of Reading into The Labour Market Experiences of Minority Ethnic Young People in Reading. This research specifically targeted BME groups including 21 African and Caribbean respondents from across Reading. It found that BME young people 'face additional barriers in terms of accessing and/or succeeding in the labour market' and that 'these barriers may be drawn on racial lines' (p. 7).

for more in-depth research to be undertaken.

Although there is a perception within the community that a number of consultations have previously been conducted at Central there is little evidence for this. In April 2002, a Needs Led survey was conducted with young people (11-25 years) of African Caribbean heritage. This research was set up between Central and MotherShip Education. It aimed to provide an opportunity for the young people of Reading to 'have a voice' and to use their views to inform the decision making process. This survey highlighted the need

2.4 Previous Research

Central aims to provide programmes for the 11-25 year age group with 13-19 year olds being the priority ages. Its fundamental aim is to be an educational, entrepreneurial, self help, social and recreational resource which facilitates individual and collective growth of the Black and Mixed Heritage communities of Reading primarily (CRYP Programming Policy, 2004).

2.3 Central's Aims

It is situated within the Youth and Community service (Y&C) but lies outside the area based youth work teams of Y&C services and currently operates on a Borough-wide basis. The centre is managed by a Senior Youth and Community worker who is line managed directly by the Principal Youth and Community Officer. There was a management committee in place during the time of Berkshire County Council. However, since the development of the unitary authority the management committee has not functioned. It is intended that this consultation will seek to clarify the role of a committee and inform on the most appropriate structure for this level of management.

2.5 Consultation

This consultation is the first to specifically target the users of Central and was commissioned by Reading Borough Council in conjunction with members of the community. It aimed to determine and clarify the future role and function of Central Reading Youth Provision.

More recently the Arts and Leisure services have conducted a survey for young people which aimed to establish how leisure time is spent and which services offered by RBC are used. The results of the survey are still being processed. However, although questionnaires were sent to Central and completed by young people their responses were not collected for use in the research.

3. Equality of Opportunity

3.1 Legislation

The Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 place a general duty on public authorities to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups in carrying out their functions. Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Race Equality Scheme provides details on how the council will meet these legal obligations.

The promotion of equality and social inclusion is stated as one of the council's strategic aims. Furthermore, the council's Equality Strategy Action plan 2002-2005 presents a statement of key aims and objectives for 2002-2005:

- I. To embed equality into the mainstream activities of the organisation
- II. To ensure that the authority meets the statutory requirements of equalities legislation, in particular the Disability Discrimination Act, the Race Relations Act (Amendment) Act and Best Value Performance Indicators relating to equality.
- III. To identify and respond to the concerns and needs of the local community.
- IV. To work with partners and take a community leadership role to promote equality issues in employment, service provision and community life.

It is the legal obligation and the Equality aims and objectives that underpin this consultation.

3.2 Ethnic Minorities

Reading has the second highest Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population in the South East after Slough. While Pakistani is the largest BME group at 2.7%, the mixed category is the second largest group at 2.4%. The Black Caribbean category has decreased from 2.7% in 1991 to 2.2% in 2001 while over the same period the African

The community have measured the success of the council not by their policies but by their actions. Their assessment is not always a positive one but it is hoped that this

RBC's Race Equality Scheme has as one of its declarations "We believe that our success will be measured not by our policies but by our actions in promoting equality for all the people of Reading" (Race Equality Scheme Part 1).

This consultation document presents the views of the African Caribbean community on Central Reading Youth Provision located in London Street and related matters. These views often refer to Reading Borough council and their perceptions of the quality of service they are receiving or not, as the case may be.

3.3 Consultation

The Youth and Community service identified in their service review that ethnic minority young people in the target group of 13-19 year olds were accessing the service across Reading in proportion to overall numbers of ethnic minorities in the Reading. However, many within the Black community have expressed their concern that the needs of the wider Black community are not being met.

The combined figures for the African and Caribbean community total 3.8% making it the largest minority group in Reading. Currently, the community have expressed the view that they use Central only 'because there is nowhere else to go'. Central is promoted as a borough wide youth and community provision. But there is no documented evidence that this centre is a council provision dedicated to meeting the needs of the diverse Black community. Thus the stated aims and objectives of the Equality Strategy Action plan have not been fully met. Central is a council Youth provision which has become a meeting place for sections of the African Caribbean community despite being limited in space and in need of repair and refurbishment. It has become a significant centre in the absence of other appropriate and more suitable accommodation.

community has grown to 1.6% up from 0.6% in the 1991 census (Office for National Statistics, 2001).

consultation will be used to inform the council of areas that need to be addressed to ensure that the African Caribbean community in Reading actually experience the benefits of stated policies and recent legislation with regard to equality of opportunity and ensure that good relations between RBC and the community are developed and maintained.

There came a point during 1979 when some young people decided to barricade themselves in the building on London Street. They recommended that a committee be formed to include young people with a remit to cater for young people. Requests were also made to make improvements to the site. These improvements included levelling the floor in the main hall, restructuring the office space and providing a kitchen and bar area.

4.2 London Street

Around 1976, a vacant building in Chain Street near St Mary's church which was leased to Berkshire County Council by Heelas became available for use by young people as a drop in centre. A number of positive activities took place there which included fundraising on the last Monday of each month, a Saturday school and cultural meetings. The Unity sports club was born out of Chain Street and there were open mornings for accessing free legal advice. A food service which offered subsidised meals on credit was available for young people who were struggling financially. When the lease expired Heelas reclaimed the building and young people were left without a place to meet. In 1978 things came to a head when no alternative provision was offered. Young people took to the streets to demand a centre to meet and socialise. A portacabin was provided in Queen's Road then the old police garage at the present site in London Street was requested and provided to the young people as a centre.

In the 1970's there was a need for young people in Reading to have a place where they could congregate and socialize. This was especially necessary as young people tended to congregate in the town centre and were regularly moved on by the police.

There is no written record of the history of Central Reading Youth Provision but there are many who 'were there' and have shared their accounts of how Central came to be. Here is that story which has been compiled from the personal accounts of members of Reading's Black community.

4.1 Origins

4. Historical Background

4.3 The Mural

The mural was painted which tells a story from the early days to the present and describes the struggles that Black people have faced. This mural continues to have a strong spiritual significance for the community today. Central Reading Youth provision symbolizes for many in the community their own struggles to find a place of belonging and continues to be a significant focal point for sections of the Black community in Reading.

5. The Current Situation

5.1 Location

Central Reading Youth Provision (CRYP) stands in a prominent position on London Street in the centre of Reading opposite the new Oracle shopping and cinema complex. It is identifiable because of the large mural of historical Black figures painted on the side of the building. It is a mural which has enormous significance to members of the Central community and others associated with it.

5.2 Facilities

The Centre is open daily from 10 am until 11 pm and open at the weekends from 9 am depending upon activity and bookings. It is sometimes referred to as Central Youth and Community Centre or Central Reading Youth provision which is painted at the front of the building.

One of the most popular aspects of the centre is Perry's Caribbean Cuisine which provides Caribbean food at lunch time at a reasonable cost. An ICT centre is open for most of the day from 12 until late and is available for members of the community to drop-in to use the facilities.

The Centre comprises a large hall with a stage, offices, an entrance and a bar/café area at the back of the building. There is a small upper level with two further rooms however access to these rooms is via a narrow and steep stairway which is inaccessible to the elderly and disabled. The building itself is in need of repair and redecoration but continues to be a spiritual home and centre for much of the community.

5.3 Programming

The centre is used by a number of groups in the evenings such as a steel pan club (RASPO), Capoeira, an African-Brazilian hybrid dance cum martial arts activity, WUMA Martial Arts and a number of DJ and Sound organisations as well as a young people's dance group (Showstopperz). There is a dominoes group, employment surgery and a sexual health drop in.

5.4 Public Entertainment License (PEL)

The Centre has not had a Public Entertainment License (PEL) for approximately 2 years which has had an impact on the use of the building particularly for voluntary organisations who have used it for fund-raising events. There are efforts currently under way to ensure that the requirements for renewing the PEL are met. The centre is used by a range of individuals and groups from the community for various activities. However, in recent years hire of the centre for functions has dropped off dramatically due to the centre not having a PEL.

It will provide a platform for better communication between the council and the community and serve to encourage the development of a positive working relationship which will ensure that the African Caribbean community do not feel marginalised and patronised but valued and included.

The findings of the consultation will inform Reading Borough Council of the views of the African and Caribbean community on the future of Central. In particular it will map the way forward based on these views and make recommendations which both the Council and the community can consider and use as a basis for change and improvement.

The Terms of reference for the consultation were as follows:

- To identify the current and potential user groups of Central Club.
- To detail the user needs and how they wish to use the club and subsequently in consultation with users what service Central Club is to provide.
- A draft mission statement to be established including aims and objectives, which would be in line with Reading Borough Council's corporate values.
- To identify present and future accommodation needs in the light of the changing needs of the community and detail the opportunities for enhanced facilities.
- To detail how Reading Borough Council and the user groups can work together to meet these needs.
- To determine the management arrangements for the club, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the users, the management and the staff team including looking at the options of independent status and charitable trust.

The objective of the consultation is to clarify the future role and function of Central Reading Youth Provision.

6. Terms of Reference

The delivery of the consultation exercise was determined from the initial explorations made at the development stage. It was anticipated that a number of focus groups would be convened as well as interviews with key individuals and community organisations. A list of approximately 80 individuals, groups and organisations was compiled from the

7.3 Phase Three: Delivery

The marketing phase was an important one which was crucial for ensuring that there was breadth of involvement from across the community incorporating users, non users and potential users. In order for the consultation to be effective it was necessary to ensure that it was marketed effectively and yielded a large and positive response. Publicity about the consultation was made to all the key leaders and community groups including churches, island associations and voluntary groups. This was primarily done through telephone calls and letters to the various groups and organisations. In some cases posters were used.

7.2 Phase Two: Marketing

During this phase the views of the current and potential users of the club were informally explored. The numbers of individuals and community groups that needed to be involved in the consultation as well as the level of interaction necessary to meet the terms of reference were established. The nature of the consultation, i.e. themes to address, questions to raise, and gaining an overall sense of the issues relating to Central were part of the development process. During this phase initial consultation with the centre staff, management team, users and members of community organisations were made to consider the best method of marketing the consultation and involving the local community.

7.1 Phase One: Development

The consultation was conducted in five phases between February and August 2004.

7. The Consultation Process

about the consultant's background and role before allowing themselves to be interviewed. It was important to ensure that a culturally appropriate and sensitive approach was made in order to gain a true picture of the needs of the community and the role of Central. This necessitated establishing a positive rapport and the trust of the community in order to engage openly. It was felt that this was achieved. Many individuals requested details of the consultant's background and role before allowing themselves to be interviewed.

Approximately 354 questionnaires were distributed and 132 returned yielding a return rate of 37%. 42 individuals were interviewed details are listed in Appendix 1. The reasons for non response to the survey varied; a small number (11) at the centre expressed their wish not to be involved because they felt that it would not change anything. Others (20) particularly at Reading College had not heard of or did not know enough about the centre to comment. Eight organisations were contacted but not interviewed for a number of reasons. Few focus groups were convened as there was an issue about individuals not wishing their personal views to be aired in the presence of others.

Appendix 1.

results of Phase One. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data. Survey questionnaires were devised and distributed to the Black churches, African Caribbean hairdressers and Barber shops in the Oxford Road area, the island and African organisations, Black voluntary organisations such as Mary Seacole Day nursery and OSCAR, Reading Refocus and Reading College of Arts and Technology. Surveys were also distributed at Central to its users and members of the user groups. Interviews were conducted with key individuals from various organisations and voluntary groups. The RCRC list of Black and Minority ethnic groups in Reading was used to access contact details. In addition, interviewees were asked to suggest the names of other individuals and groups who should be involved in the consultation and how they felt the consultation should be conducted. A number of valuable suggestions were made and incorporated in the consultation. A full list of the organisations surveyed and interviewed is found in

7.4 Phase Four: Evaluation

This phase entailed analysing the questionnaire and interview data. A data base was set up to enable the analysis of the questionnaire data. The responses to the open questions were categorised. The interview data was imported into a qualitative data analysis software programme and common themes and needs were identified and explicit and underlying concerns and issues extracted. Typical responses to the open questions in the questionnaire and the interviews are given in the findings. Names or descriptors have not been used to ensure confidentiality.

7.5 Phase Five: Presentation of Findings

A written report of the findings was drafted. The key findings from the consultation with each of the terms of reference were addressed and presented. The draft was presented to the groups that were consulted and to the elected members of Reading Borough Council with an opportunity for responding to it before the final draft of the report was prepared. A PowerPoint presentation will be prepared and a final summary of the report of the consultation will be disseminated to the appropriate interested parties. Individuals involved in the consultation may acquire full electronic versions of the report on request.

8. Consultation Findings

8.1 Introduction

The consultation involved interviews with key individuals in the community who represent most of the Black organisations in Reading as well as other individuals who are intimately involved with Central such as staff and users. In addition to interviews a survey was conducted using a self report questionnaire which was distributed across various organisations and to users of Central. The data collected was analysed and is presented here.

8.2 Interviews

The interviews conducted were concerned with establishing views on a range of issues such as strengths and weaknesses of the Centre, its place in the community, future vision for the centre, the programme of activities on offer, management, the role of the council, accommodation and facilities and their recommendations. A copy of the interview schedule for user groups can be found in Appendix 2. Modified interview schedules were used for management, staff, and interested individuals (copies of these schedules are available on request).

8.3 Questionnaires

The questionnaires sought to determine the frequency of use of Central, reason for non use, whether Central meets the needs of the community, need for an African Caribbean centre and changes that need to take place. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

8.4 Difficulties

Any research that attempts to explore the experiences, views and perceptions of individuals will always be fraught with difficulties. Issues of people's perspectives, emotions and feelings are subjective and will often conflict with the perspectives, emotions and feelings of others.

The consultation has elicited a range of responses about the future of Central. Many conflicting views have been expressed which adds to the complexity of the consultation. What is important is for the main players; RBC, users of Central and community groups and organisations to recognise that despite the differing and sometimes opposing views the only real way forward is through compromise, understanding and tolerance. It is hoped that the various individuals and groups involved will be willing to work together with others of opposing views and come to a shared understanding and determination to move forward for the benefit of the whole community.

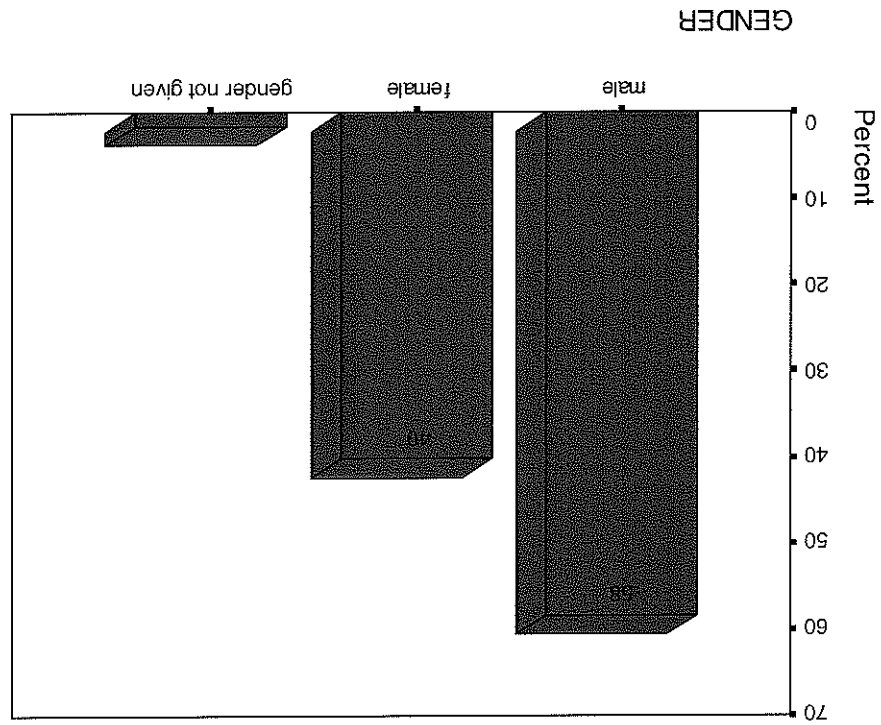
9. Description of Survey Sample

Three hundred and fifty four questionnaires were distributed across the community in Reading. 132 were returned. The results of the analysis of the data are presented below.

9.1 Gender

A higher percentage of men responded compared to females. 58% (77) of questionnaires were returned by males and 40% (53) were returned by females. There were 2 questionnaires where gender was not specified. (See Fig.1)

Figure 1 Gender of Respondents



9.2 Age Group

Respondents ranged in age from under 15 years old to over 51 years. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of respondents according to age group. The highest single age group to

Age Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Under 15	15	11.4
16 - 19	24	18.2
20 - 24	16	12.1
25 - 30 years	16	12.1
31 - 40 years	29	22.0
41 - 50 years	16	12.1
over 51 years	13	9.8
age not given	3	2.3
Total	132	100.0

Table 1 Age Group of Respondents

Table 1 presents details of the number of respondents for each age group.

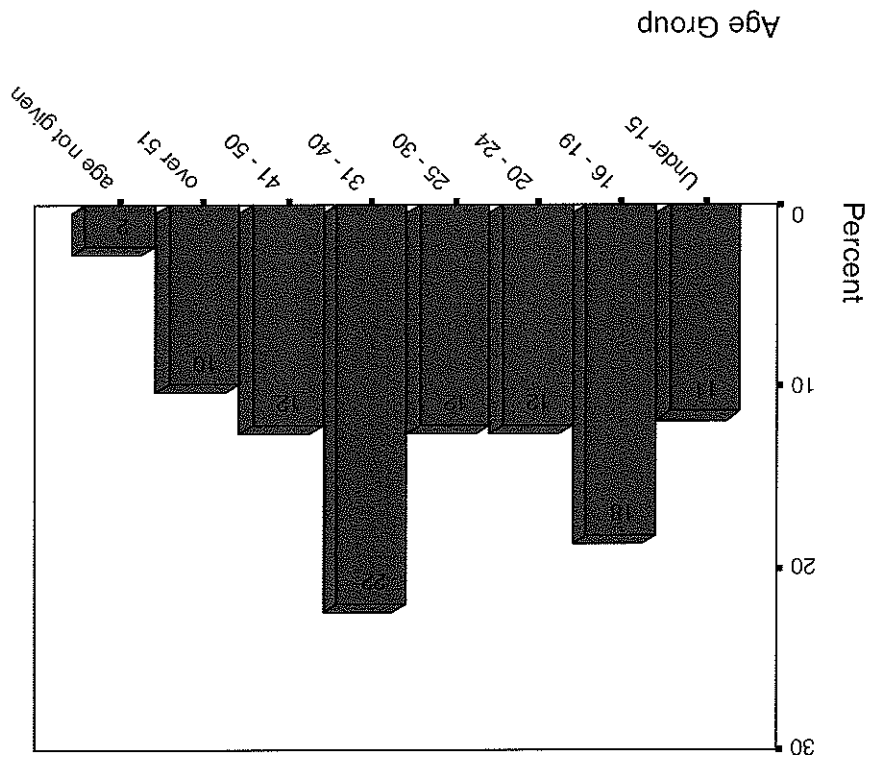


Figure 2 Age Group of Respondents (numbers in bars are percentages for each age group)

respond were between 31-40 years. However, only 29% of all respondents were under 19 years old and includes the designated age for youth provision of 13-19 years.

9.3 Use of Centre

The majority (89%) of those responding to the survey actually used the centre. Perry's Caribbean Cuisine was used by most respondents. The main hall was used for socialising by over half of those responding to the survey. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2 Percent of Respondents using Facilities

Use of Centre	Frequency	Percent
Perry's Caribbean Cuisine	91	69%
Computer Club	42	32%
Socialising in hall	68	52%
Other	35	27%

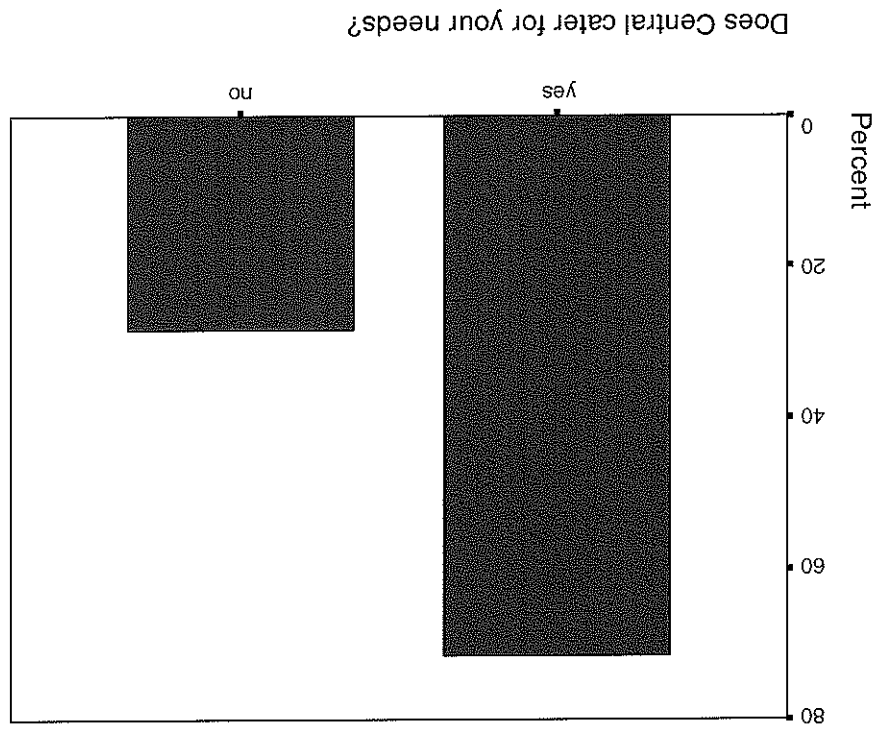
Other clubs such as RASPO, Capoeira and DJ were used by 38% of respondents.

10. Responses to Survey Questions

10.1 Does Central Cater for Your Needs?

This question was asked on the survey the responses are shown in Fig. 3. Overall, 72% of those who responded to this question said that Central catered for their needs 28% said it did not. Of those who said yes 33% were female and 67% male.

Figure 3 Percentage Response to the Question: Does Central Cater for your needs?



- When broken down by age group more of those within the 16-19, 31-40 and over 51 age groups felt that Central did not cater for their needs (19%, 26% and 29%, respectively).
- Despite this many respondents who said yes Central catered for their needs qualified their responses with additional comments of specific areas where their needs were not being met or where there was room for improvement. The following section presents a selection of the various comments that were made in response to the question Does Central cater for your needs? The statements associated with a positive response are presented first. All responses written in italics are direct quotes from the questionnaires. (Figures in brackets are percentage for those who answered this question)
- Perry's (24%)**
- *Excellent food.*
 - *Great food, best!*
 - *Perry's take away has great Caribbean food.*
 - *A good lunch venue*
 - *Perry's gets top ratings for the sweet Caribbean food*
 - *The food's good.*
- ICT Suite (8%)**
- *When I needed to use the Internet it was available.*
 - *I'm able to complete assignments using the computer facilities.*
 - *It provides a computer club which I enjoy attending*
- A Meeting Place (10%)**
- *A local meeting point.*
 - *Central is a place where I go to socialise with other people and take part in some of the different activities they have there and a place you also can have great fun.*
 - *It provides a good meeting place and encouragement for my disability rather than me being on the street.*
 - *Central is a place where I go to socialise with other people and take part in some of the different activities they have there.*
- Environment (14%)**
- *Safe environment. Friendly environment, a welcoming place.*
 - *Friendly place.*
 - *It's a good multi-cultural environment.*

Lack of Information (10%)

- Lack of information about Black community.

Lack of Activities (32%)

- No social life for 'Big People'. All activities aimed at younger or smokers' groups.
- There isn't enough things going on such as parties, dances, etc.
- No courses on my interests.
- Could be doing more. More workshops: Black history classes, health info etc.
- No. They do not do a lot of activities for young people
- No. No dances take place playing our type of music.

Facilities (29%)

- Poor facilities.
- Condition of the building could be improved.
- It is used as a last resort. The building is old and the surroundings are not clean.
- Central requires a full refurbishment, despite recent attempt.
- The building is shabby and uninviting.
- Not suitable to go and attend any functions.
- I have been there twice for events and both times I've been there I haven't really felt too good about the place.
- Its reputation is very bad.

section on the questionnaire.

centre that respondents were not happy with that were added to the additional comments below. It was noted that there was a higher percentage of responses on aspects of the Selections of the statements associated with a negative response to the question are listed

worker who operates the centre as a service to the community.

It should be noted here that the ICT Suite is not funded by RBC but is an initiative of the current Senior Youth and Community worker at the centre with the support of the ICT

- Needs more chairs and tables for seating. Toilet facilities need improvement
- Central meets my needs but it could do with improvement. It's too dark inside.
- More pleasant building needed for functions and meetings.
- It is a club that is very good for the community, but more services needed to be on offer for the club to shine and the youth can socialise.

Improvements (8%)

Although most respondents stated that Central caters for their needs many qualified this response with a number of exceptions. Higher proportions of respondents expressed concerns over facilities, the lack of activities and the impact of the loss of the PEL. Perry's was considered to be a successful part of the centre.

10.2 Summary

- Impact of the Loss of the PEL (26%)**
- There isn't enough things going on such as parties, dances etc.
 - We used to have nice conscious dances which I liked very much
 - No. Entertainment license is no longer available. This has made it impossible to hold community events.
 - Used to go there for dances that were held there. It used to be good to hear afro-Caribbean music and get together.
 - Not at present. I did use it recently when there were functions and when they were playing the type of music that our community listen to.

- Not knowing what the facilities have to offer, I can vaguely say yes but being specific no.
- I've not chanced going to Central and am not aware of what goes on there

- I think young Black youth need a place to socialise.
- To make the youth get together
- To keep the young people off the street and somewhere for them to go and enjoy.
- Good for socialising.
- We all need a place to meet.

A Centre for Socialising (16%)

A large number of comments were made in response to this question. (Figures in brackets are percentage of those who answered this question)

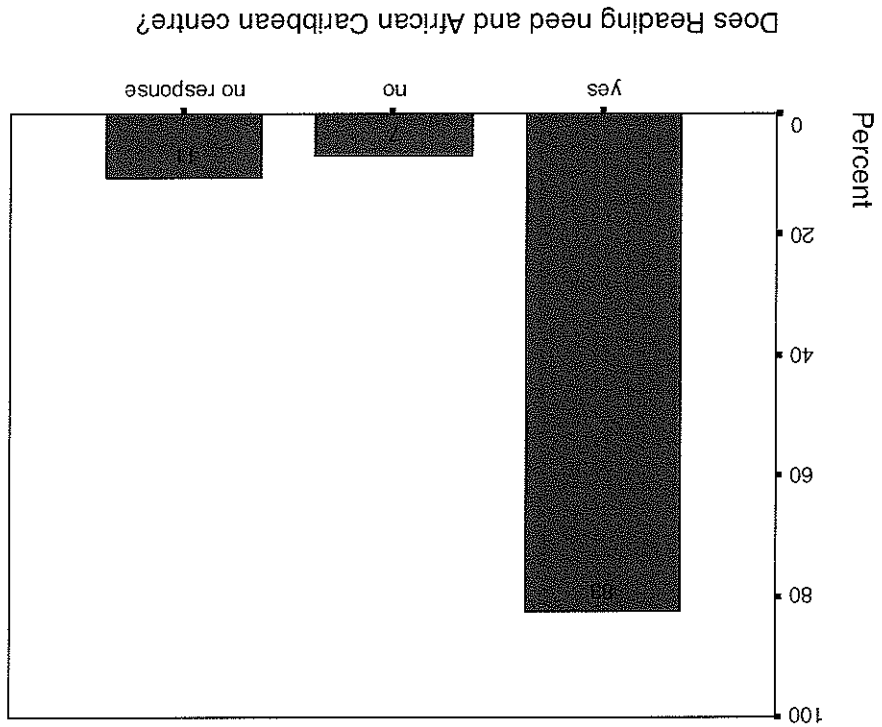


Figure 4 Does Reading need an African Caribbean Centre? (Numbers in bars are percentages for each response.)

10.3 Does Reading Need an African Caribbean Centre? Figure 4 shows the difference in respondent's views of whether there is a need for an African Caribbean centre in Reading. Of those who responded to this question 83% said that there was a need for an African Caribbean centre and 7% disagreed. Across gender there was no difference in the responses 92% of each gender said yes there was a need for a centre.

- We all need somewhere.
 - For people to socialise meet one another.
 - To socialise and meet people with similar culture.
 - So that Black people can socialise.
 - So different cultures can socialise
 - To socialise and relate to each-other.
- Education and Cultural Awareness (9%)**
- To create awareness of African culture.
 - To help with cultural engagement
 - We need to uplift our youth with knowledge of our heritage.
 - Something for the culture to thrive.
 - It needs a centre for excellence to welcome other cultures to embrace the said culture and learning.
 - We need to interact and learn about our roots and culture
 - So Black people can learn
- To Build Community (14%)**
- What is a community without any service for their culture without this club?
 - What will the children of the future do?
 - To bring all the community together.
 - Promotes community spirit.
 - Mixed community is good.
 - For unity.
 - We should all come together.
 - As we need to join together and be one great people.
 - Because Black people need to be recognised often.
 - There should be a decent centre for the Black community for there is a lot of this group in Reading. We need to go forward, not backwards. The centre should also cater for all ages of the Black community.
- A Centre for Activities (9%)**
- For youth to do some activities and get off the street.
 - Yes. Because Reading needs a place where African Caribbean food is prepared.
 - Yes. Central is place for the Caribbean centre where young people Black, African have opportunities to do different activities.
 - To have more entertainment.
 - There is nowhere in Reading which provides entertainment for the older generations of the Black community.
 - Mainly for meetings and fundraising.
- Need for a Centre (32%)**
- The African /Caribbean community has nowhere to meet.
 - We need separate clubs.
 - Yes. Because it's a good thing for young people and old people.

The majority of respondents stated that Reading needs a centre for the African Caribbean community. Some suggested that the cultural needs of Africans and Caribbeans differ and there may be a need for two centres. Having a centre for socialising and to build community were important reasons given. Many simply responded by answering yes to the question.

10.4 Summary

- *No. We should all come together.*

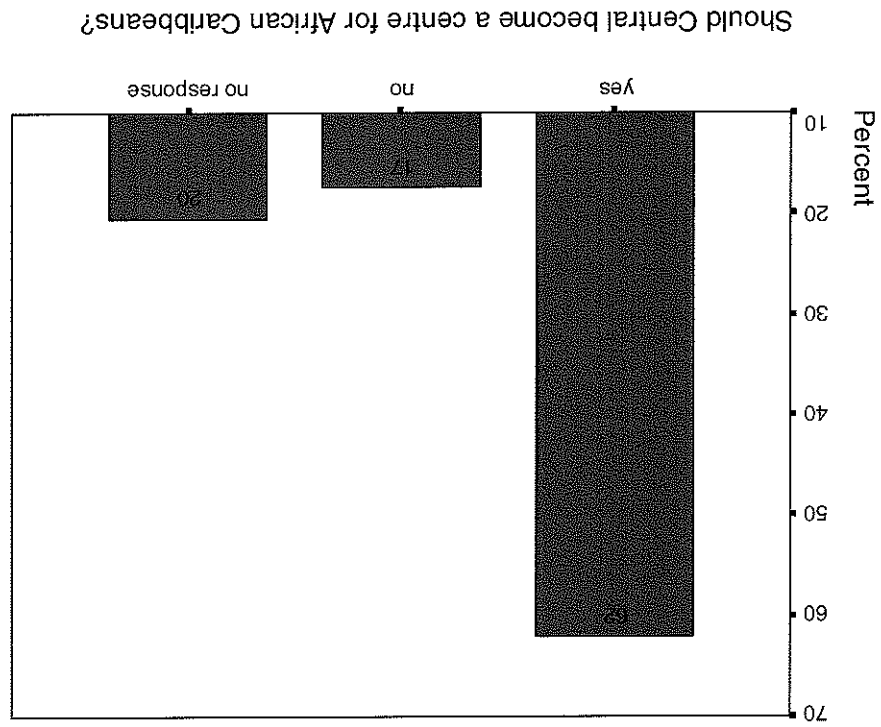
There was only one negative response to this question:

- *Yes. Because we don't really have anything apart from Central. Yes. None in Reading and we have a large Black community*
- *To concentrate on the needs of ethnic minorities.*
- *There is nothing available for our community needs*
- *There is nowhere in Reading that has anything for this community.*
- *There is no real place for the Black community.*
- *To provide for Black needs.*
- *Yes because I'm exposed to racism in other pubs.*
- *African and Caribbeans are two different people; it would be good if the Africans got their own building.*
- *African communities are sidelined and more facilities will help.*
- *There are limited resources and centres for us in the area.*
- *The centre is run down and isn't good in the health and safety department. For over thirty years now I have been in Reading and there has been nowhere for the Black community to go and do fundraising for our community.*
- *It is a frustrating situation. It seems that unless Black people riot and complain, they get nothing. All towns who rioted and constantly complained now have really nice centres for their community. This is not a good message to send out to a really fed-up community.*

10.5 Do you think Central should become a centre for the African Caribbean community in Reading?

Most of the respondents felt that Central should become a centre for the African Caribbean community in Reading (see Fig. 5). In terms of overall percentages, 62% of those who responded to the question said yes, Central should become a centre for the African Caribbean community in Reading, 17% said no. Across gender more males than females said yes, 83% and 68% respectively.

Figure 5 Do you think Central should become a centre for the African Caribbean community in Reading?



There were many comments which were similar to those made in Section 10.3. Most comments covered the following topics: ideal location, socialising, centre for learning, a need for a centre and it is well known and established. A sample of positive comments is presented below: (Figures in brackets are percentages of those who answered this question)

- Need for a New Centre (48%)**
- A new centre is needed with better facilities and a new nightclub for the African Caribbean communities.
 - Council should provide something new in a different area.
 - An alternative should be made which offers a more modern way forward.
 - Central is too small to cater for the entire Black community.
 - There is no license, it's dirty and it needs upgrading with wheel-chair access.

There were comments made that responded negatively to the question. Of the 17% who said that Central should not be the centre for the African Caribbean community in Reading almost half said that there should be a new building to serve this purpose.

- A Need (22%)**
- Because it is needed, every other race has their own.
 - There are no other facilities for the Black community to get together and meet.

- Education and Socialising (28%)**
- Socialising and learning.
 - Somewhere that people can socialise and relax.
 - As most people who attend here are of an Afro-Caribbean heritage and we need somewhere we can feel at ease, relax and call our own.
 - To promote welfare, culture and social activities among different African Caribbean communities.
 - Central is the only place in Reading where Black African Caribbean's have to go, there is no other place for them in Reading.

- Location (13%)**
- It is an ideal location.
 - Convenient to get to transport wise.
 - It is in a Central location where all facets of the community can share easy access.
 - Lots of people know about Central its well known and I guess most people will find it easier to get there.

- Close it down and start from scratch
- Building needs to be gutted and improvements made to make it more suitable for the purpose.
- They should pull down the whole building and provide us with a decent centre.
- A new bigger building that can cater for all our needs.

New Building (9%)

- Revamp and renovate the place properly.
- Redecoration of all toilet provision, more chairs and tables. Improved kitchen facilities.
- Building needs to be rebuilt, decent refurbishing and the décor needs to change. The lighting is not that good and the whole place looks old. It is in need of refurbishment.
- Central in its present condition does not match that of the environment opposite (Oracle). Also London Street is now getting modernised and so should Central. It is in an ideal location for all types of people and must be refurbished.
- We also need an area for entertainment like an area to socialise, watch TV, listen to music etc. The computer room is excellent and helps out many people but we need more.
- More investment in learning facilities
- A music studio
- I think Central needs a gym.
- More car parking space.

Refurbishment (58%)

Overall 93% of those who responded to this question indicated that they would like to see changes taking place at Central. Similar percentages of males and females responded to this question, 92% and 94%, respectively. There was a wide range of additional comments which are reported here.

The suggestions for changes to Central covered the following topics refurbishment, more activities, new building, Public Entertainment License (PEL), and improved promotion.

10.7 What changes would you like to see taking place at Central?

Most respondents to the survey felt that Central should become the African Caribbean centre in Reading. However, a small number responded negatively to the question and almost half of this group suggested that a new building was needed.

10.6 Summary

- They need to have a steady flow of activities happening there with good promotion that will get more people going into the club.
 - Many young people in Reading are not aware of what Central has to offer them. More work needs to be done on promoting and advertising, i.e. large vinyl banners hanging from the front of the building as a great column of traffic both foot and vehicle passes. It is a prime location.
 - Making people more aware of it.
 - Once improvements made, an extensive publicity campaign should take place promoting Central.
- Improved Promotion (6%)**

- Getting back the licence for the club there is nowhere to go out partying in Reading.
 - I'd like to see it have its license back
 - It should be made available up to 4am on social evenings.
- Public Entertainment License (13%)**

- Men's health group
 - More work on young people and school exclusion, additional education aids, more work on young people's self esteem.
 - More race relations support for Black committee.
 - Facilities for young women, and young mothers and their children.
 - Community members taking an active part in the running, upkeep and funding of the facility.
- Services (14%)**

- Entertainment, parties, dances and African shows.
 - More competitions and days out.
 - More youth activities, drama and discussions
 - I would like to see a lot more activities for young people so that they can improve their lives and this will help them to achieve goals.
 - More cultural events
 - More classes for youth in African History.
- More Activities (45%)**

- Central has one main hall and can only hold one function at a time. There are several minority communities in Reading and Central cannot cater for the many different functions. There are not enough facilities compared with the number of communities it is meant to serve.
- We need a building where there is better parking facilities and better indoor décor.

Nearly all respondents indicated that they wanted to see changes at Central. Refurbishment and more activities and services were important. Other comments that were made were associated with better promotion of the centre once refurbishment has

10.8 Summary

- Very disappointed that Reading Borough Council promotes equal opportunities but then they failed to provide opportunity for the Black community to hold Black functions and events.
 - Ethnic minority groups in Reading play an important role as most of these people are voluntary and non-profit making. This makes it more difficult to live this way. Reading Borough Council should take note of these people and cater for their needs, which includes the provision of a large, suitably located, well managed and affordable hall which is of a high standard.
 - In future I would like to see Central as it was before.
 - Bring back the old days when Central was a nice meeting and raving place.
 - I think Central should be open. It has been closed for too long. I think it is time for us, a Black people to stand up and fight to help build a better community in Reading for the Black people. I strongly believe that all Black people in Reading should get together and get that club up and going again because it is for our own good. It will also enable us to live better as Black people and to be a stronger set of people to help build society.
- presented here.

Other Comments
There were a number of other comments that were added at the end of the questionnaire. Additional comments which have not been covered elsewhere are

communities to have equal access.

also references to managing the centre in such a way that would allow other hall, no smoking, and dealing with the negative stereotyped reputation. There were respondents who made references to the removal of older men who loiter in the main These were the main suggestions although there were lower percentages of

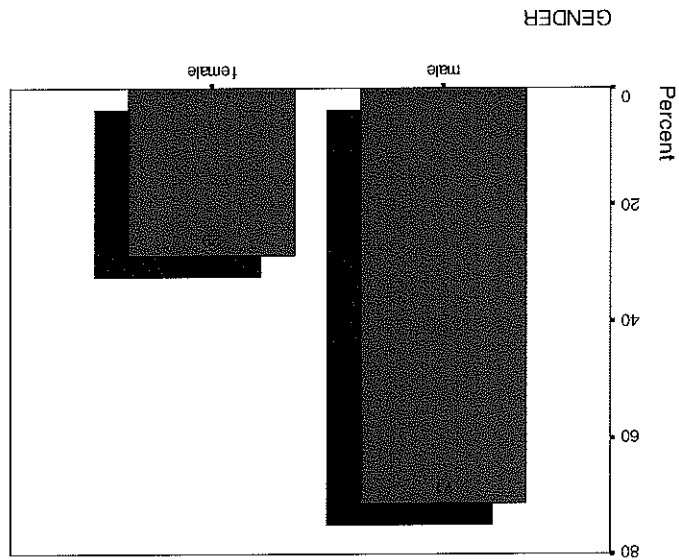
taken place. Reference to the reputation of the centre although made by few in the questionnaire data was an important factor in the interview data.

10.9 Survey of Users Attending Central

Over a period of 8 weeks (March–April 2004) the security personnel on the doors at central were asked to keep a checklist of all those entering the building. They were asked to record gender and to broadly indicate the age group of those attending. The security personnel were recording from 12-5pm. While there is a level of subjectivity in judging an individual's age group the recorded data gives an indication of the use of the centre over the period. This is useful data but must be treated cautiously as it was not independently recorded.

Over the period of 8 weeks there were 2845 counts of individuals entering the building. There was an average weekly attendance of 355. Of this number the largest group were males making up 71% of those entering the building. Females made up 29%. (See Fig.6)

Figure 6 Percentage of males and females using Central over 8 weeks



Nearly one third of those using the Centre over the period of 8 weeks were aged 31-40 years old. 9% were in the 16-19 year age group and 10% were recorded as being under

Most of the survey respondents actually use the centre. Perry's Caribbean Cuisine was the most popular part of the centre with socialising in the hall and the ICT centre also well attended. Most respondents felt that Central catered for their needs, however for many this was qualified with additional comments about other needs that were not being met. The condition of the facilities, lack of activities and the impact of the loss of the license were concerns expressed by many who responded to this question.

The questionnaire data as presented here suggests that those who responded to the survey had strong views which they wished to express. Most respondents added additional comments in the spaces provided. There were more males than females who responded. The majority of those who responded were in the 31-40 age group but just under half were aged less than 24 years old.

10.10 Summary

The figures above do not account for the period outside 12-5pm as recording did not take place. There are no records for the number of youth using the centre during the evenings.

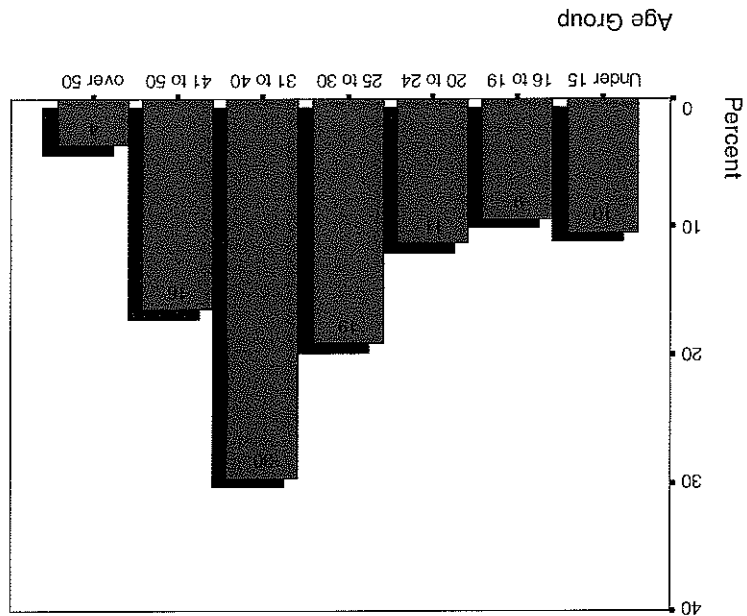


Figure 7 Age Groups Attending the Centre over the Period

15 years old. (See Fig. 7) The final 3 weeks of the survey would have been part of the school Easter holidays and may account for the younger age groups attending the centre.

The majority of respondents expressed a need for an African Caribbean centre in Reading for the purpose of providing a place to socialise and to build community. Views about whether Central should become this centre were mostly positive due to location, need and the historical value of the site. Of those who disagreed nearly half requested a new building on a different site.

Despite the strong desire to have Central as the African Caribbean centre for Reading most respondents qualified their responses by highlighting the need to refurbish and improve the current site. There was also a desire for the PBL to be renewed and for more activities to be offered.

Overall, the questionnaire results indicate that Central should become the centre for the Black community in Reading but must be redesigned and refurbished to meet the needs of the whole community.

He reported that he has attempted to acquire property on numerous occasions within the town centre to use as a restaurant but has faced a number of obstacles. When applying to estate agents for information regarding properties he stated that they have not been forthcoming with available properties once they are made aware that the property is for a Caribbean restaurant. The council may wish to investigate this situation further to ensure that if proven there is equality of opportunity for all ethnic groups applying for commercial properties.

Many community members have suggested that the restaurant needs to be showcased because it has an excellent product. Some have suggested that it should be moved to the centre of town as there is a need for a restaurant that provides Caribbean cuisine. The manager of the restaurant is keen to develop his business and move into larger premises.

The success of Perry's Caribbean cuisine is evidenced in the high numbers of individuals attending Central to access the restaurant. It has served the community and been able to grow as a business venture due to the security of its current location. In recognising success the future of this business within Central has to be considered. For the business to continue to grow and thrive it needs to be able to move into larger premises in order to serve the wider population of Reading. There has been an enormous development of restaurants on the Riverside at the Oracle which cater for most eating tastes.

11. Perry's Caribbean Cuisine

12. Introduction to Interview Data

12.1 Introduction

Forty two interviews were conducted with various key individuals from the Black community in Reading. They included Chairs of Island and country groups, management and staff at the centre, Reading Borough Council personnel, user group leaders, interested individuals from the centre, former managers and members of past and present advisory/management groups, Thames Valley Police and leaders of various other voluntary organisations within Reading. The interview data was analysed and a number of themes arose which are listed in Table 3. The interview data will be presented in response to each of the terms of reference. All responses in italics are quotes from interviewees.

Table 3 Percentage of Interviewees responding to each topic.

Topics	Frequency	Percent (%)
Accommodation and Facilities	31	74
Community	32	76
Future Vision	35	83
Management	31	74
Mission	13	31
PEL License	15	36
Personal Involvement	35	83
Police Issues	3	7
Reading Borough Council	13	31
Recommendations	37	88
Reputation	22	52
Role of Council	28	67
Strengths	34	81
Use of Centre	13	31
Weaknesses	38	90
Youth Centre	14	33