



ST BUDEAUX AND BARNE BARTON

LISTENING WEEK REPORT

Prepared by
Rachel Earley



Table of Contents



01

Overview

An overview of Listening Week including the aims, purpose and the next steps.

02

The Story Behind the Idea

How did this compassionate approach to community listening begin?

04

Planning and Participation

The process of drafting the proposal and connecting with local organisations.

05

Our Approach

The questions asked, the goals and why this mattered.

07

How We Did It

An overview of the listening week timetable and how local organisations were involved.

08

Data Analysis

How we made sense of the conversations.

09

Insights, Feedback and Highlights

What did we hear? What were the themes? What did this tell us?

14

Considerations and Next Steps

Reflecting on the process and where we go from here.

Overview

Listening Week 2025 was a community engagement initiative launched by Marine Academy Campus supported by the Enhanced Offer, a partnership led by Public Health at Plymouth City Council and supported by 20 local organisations.

Aim

To deeply listen to the community of St Budeaux and Barne Barton, to gather a snapshot of lived experience in the community, providing insight to better inform our decisions and actions.

Purpose

Driven by the questions “What does a good day look like?” and “What does a bad day look like?”, the initiative was rooted in Appreciative Inquiry, a strengths-based approach that seeks to uncover what’s working well alongside areas for improvement. Staff across schools and services received training to listen with empathy and care.

What we heard

From quiet reflections to passionate conversations, Listening Week brought forward a wide range of voices that painted a picture of life in St Budeaux and Barne Barton. As we listened, a set of powerful themes began to surface – the everyday building blocks of a good or difficult day. People spoke about the value of close **community ties**, the importance of **feeling safe**, and their frustrations and hopes for **local services**. They shared both pride and concern for the **natural spaces** around them, highlighted the joy found in simple **daily activities**, and reflected deeply on the **needs and experiences of local teenagers**. These insights are more than themes – they are stories of belonging, challenge, and possibility. They show us what matters most to people here and now.

Key Figures from Listening Week

Participants	Partners	Volunteers	Comments	Venues
 629	 20	 8	 840+	 9

Next Steps

Reflect & Respond: Stakeholders will meet to review insights and prioritise actions.

Co-create Solutions: A follow-up community event will invite residents to help shape responses.

Sustain a Listening Culture: Ongoing training and regular listening activities will be embedded across schools and services.



Participants from The Great Escape Gardening Sessions
St Budeaux and Barne Barton Wellbeing Hub

The Story Behind the Idea

A Compassionate Community Approach: How Listening Week Began

It all started around a table, with a conversation. As part of the **Enhanced Offer**, a partnership led by **Public Health at Plymouth City Council**, a group of us from different organisations began meeting regularly. We were united by a shared goal: to support the health and wellbeing of children, young people, and families in Barne Barton and St Budeaux.

Our meetings were full of energy and ideas. But over time, a key issue became clear: We didn't all have a shared picture of what was really happening in the community. During one meeting, two questions were asked that made us all pause:

“How are we capturing the information we gather?”

“How can we share the information captured?”

We realised that while we were all working hard, we often held different pieces of the puzzle. To make real progress, we needed to step back, slow down, and listen.

That's how Listening Week came about. The idea, first proposed by Marine Academy, was straightforward: Dedicate a week to listening. No agenda. No assumptions. Just two open questions:

“What does a good day look like?”

“What does a bad day look like?”

Listening Week was coordinated by Rachel Earley, Community Engagement Lead at Marine Academy, and supported by Dr. Rebecca Carter Dillon from Plymouth University and Karen Pilkington, POP Network Convener for Belong in Plymouth.

Guided by Appreciative Inquiry, which focuses on recognising strengths as well as challenges, we created space for honest conversations, about what's working, what's not, and what matters to people.

Listening Week wasn't about quick fixes. It was about **building trust**, **hearing** a range of voices, and creating a clearer, **shared understanding** of life in our community. It gave us the chance to stop, listen, and learn together.



Planning and Participation

Who was involved?

To move forward, we drafted a proposal outlining suggested sessions and what the week might look like. We then reached out to the Enhanced Offer collective to gauge interest and support from local organisations. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with **20 partners** keen to be involved:



Volunteers, at Tamar View Community Centre's Food Hub, demonstrating the power of community-led action by showing how local people, through care and collaboration, are part of the solution to shared challenges.



St Bludeaux and Barne Barton Wellbeing Hub



Our Approach

Exploring Everyday Experiences: Good Days and Bad Days

As part of our conversations, we asked two open-ended questions:

“What does a good day look like?”

“What does a bad day look like?”

These questions were designed to encourage people to reflect on their own lived experiences in simple, relatable terms. Asking about a good day helps us understand what brings people **joy, comfort, connection**, or a **sense of achievement**. It highlights the moments, people, routines, or supports that contribute to wellbeing and satisfaction.

At the same time, asking about a bad day helps uncover the **barriers, frustrations**, or **unmet needs** that can get in the way. It provides insight into the challenges people face, not in abstract terms, but in how they play out in daily life.

By looking at both good and bad days, we can identify **what works well** and where there are **opportunities** to create more of the conditions that support positive experiences. These insights are grounded in real stories and help guide practical, community-led improvements.



Local cooking club creating space for people to learn, connect, and support one another. A practical example of how community-led activities strengthen relationships and build confidence.

Our Approach

Our goals:

- **To gather real insight** into what people in St Budeaux and Barne Barton are thinking, feeling, and experiencing in their daily lives. By sharing these insights with partners and decision-makers, we can work more closely together, use resources better, and support the community in ways that really make a difference.
- **To build stronger relationships** by starting open conversations. Listening shows people they are seen and heard. It builds trust, creates connection, and helps us understand one another better.

Why This Matters

When done well, appreciative inquiry doesn't just help us understand a community, it helps people come together. Asking and answering these questions can spark new ideas, build energy, and inspire action.


For us as professionals, this week was also about **becoming better listeners**. We want to hear people with **empathy, patience, and curiosity**. All staff took part in training on how to listen well and how to use appreciative inquiry in their roles. We also reflected together on why this work matters and how it shapes our culture.

When schools embed this kind of listening into daily practice, they become more than educational spaces, they become **trusted hubs** where people feel they **belong**. They become places where **every voice matters** and every story counts.



Outside the library, two 'buzz-worthy' conversation starters brought curiosity and smiles—using creativity to invite community voices. A playful nod to The Buzz, their community-led magazine, and the power of listening in unexpected places.

How We Did It

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>NHS Mobile Research Unit Starting from the Wellbeing Hub 8.30am-1pm</p> <p> Plymouth Research and Development Healthy research that improves lives</p> <p>PEEP Marine Academy Primary 9am-10am</p> <p> Step by Step The Barn 10am-11.15am</p> <p> MAST Parent Drop In Marine Primary 2pm-3pm</p> <p> MAST</p>	<p>Plymouth City Bus Chatter Bus Wolsey Road 10am-2pm</p> <p> The Cooks and The Great Escape gardening sessions St Budeaux and Barne Barton Wellbeing hub 11am-1pm</p> <p> Parents of SEND Drop in Marine Primary 2pm-3pm</p> <p> MAST Open Youth Space 11yrs-14yrs The Barn 5pm-6.30pm</p> <p></p>	<p>Parents of SEND Drop In Marine Secondary 9am-10am</p> <p> MAST Cafe and Connect The Barn 10am-2pm</p> <p> Pop Up Food Hub Tamar View 10.30-12pm</p> <p>Secondary Parent MAST Workshop Marine Secondary 2pm-3pm</p> <p> MAST</p>	<p>Drop in with Community Builder St Budeaux Library 11am-2pm</p> <p></p>	<p>Warm Space Tamar View 9am-3pm</p> <p>Listening Week Celebration Event Marine Campus 3pm-4pm</p> <p>Open Youth Space ages 7yrs-10yrs The Barn 3.30pm-5pm</p> <p></p>

Where We Listened

Our Listening Week timetable was designed to connect with the community in meaningful and practical ways, making it easy for people to share their thoughts in spaces they already use and trust.

We set up in locations where people naturally gather, from schools and libraries to wellbeing hubs and social events. For example, the **NHS Mobile Research Unit** parked on **St Budeaux Square**, allowing us to speak with passersby who might not otherwise attend a formal meeting. This helped us reach a wider group, including those who were just going about their day.

We also joined regularly attended activities, like the **Men's Gardening Club**, **Bingo**, and **Warm Space drop-ins**, where we knew people would feel relaxed and ready to talk. These informal settings helped create conversations that felt natural and open.

By attending **student council meetings** at both the **primary** and **secondary schools**, we made sure that young people had a voice and gave them the opportunity to share ideas and work together on things that matter to them. In some instances, we offered small gift cards as a thank you, which helped open up conversations and build relationships, especially in settings where people may not have expected to be asked for their views. However, we found that this was not always necessary or appropriate. Many people were simply happy to share their thoughts when approached in the right space and with genuine interest.

By choosing these varied spaces, we reached people in moments of everyday life rather than relying only on formal consultations. This helped build trust, encouraged honest conversations, and ensured the voices we heard truly reflected the community.



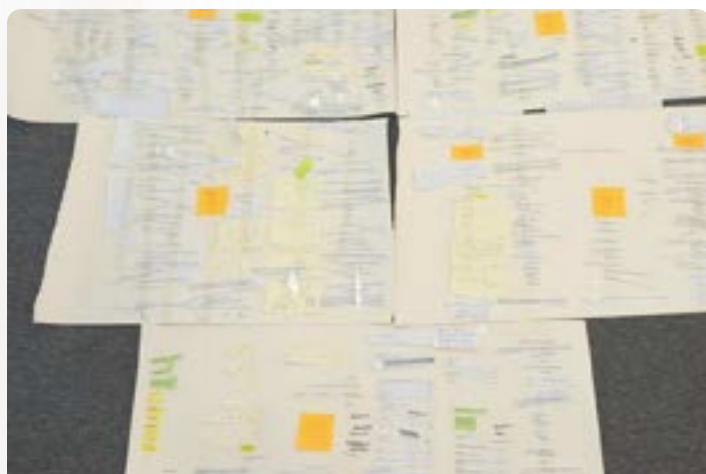
Members of the Community and Key Stakeholders were invited to a making sense session where they went through the responses and sorted them into themes.

Data Analysis

How we made sense of it all

To refine and validate the emerging themes, nine individuals—including volunteers and service representatives who took part in Listening Week—were invited to a collaborative “**make sense**” session. This wasn’t just a sorting task: participants engaged in rich, thoughtful conversations, often moving comments between themes as they explored different interpretations. Through this dialogue, the group worked toward a shared understanding of what each comment represented. Only once consensus was reached were comments fixed in place, ensuring that the final themes genuinely reflected the community’s lived experience.

During the make sense session, a vague comment about “turning right” was clarified as a reference to a frequently ignored ‘no right turn’ near a school—posing a safety issue. Without local context, this could have been overlooked. The session reinforced how vital community insight is for accurate interpretation.



We began analysing the data, which included online forms, handwritten notes, children’s Post-its, and teacher input. Using large sheets of paper, we grouped comments into initial themes—a time-consuming but essential first step in making sense of the responses.

Insights

“Happy to have buses that go to plenty of places.”

“My son got assaulted last night playing football... it would be nice if the PSCOs were more visible.”

“Difficult to get a doctor’s appointment.”

“If it was a city centre and people were treading through dog excrement, it would be sorted.”

“Could we just have a dog bin? They said no. Then we got a load of glossy flyers through the door.”

“We’re on the edge of the river it’s beautiful.”

“I wouldn’t dream of walking the dog alone at half seven or eight – you just don’t know anymore.”

“It’s about asking people what they want – otherwise they don’t turn up.”

“I’ve had a good life... and I’m here to tell the tale.”

“I like that me and my grandad go to the pasty shop together”

“There’s a lovely sense of community here.”

“Lots of people don’t realise the tots group is over at the orange building.”

“That there is a lot of rubbish.”

“There are not enough things for young people to do.”

“Community events bring people together.”

Feedback

What We Heard

During Listening Week, over **840 comments** were gathered from residents across the St Budeaux community. People responded in a range of ways – through **conversations, written notes, and drawings.**

Themes

Favourite Places and Activities

This theme was strongly positive. People described the importance of:

- Spending time outdoors, visiting local
- Parks and beaches, enjoying simple
- Activities with family and friends

Community, Friends and Family

Many people expressed pride in their community and strong connections to their local area. They described friendly neighbours, a sense of belonging, and positive memories of local events. However, others shared that:

- They feel lonely or disconnected
- There are fewer community events
- Some neighbours are unkind or unwelcoming

Natural Environment

Feedback about green spaces was more balanced. Residents shared how much they value:

- Parks, nature trails, and outdoor spaces
- Peaceful places to walk and relax

At the same time, they raised concerns about:

- Litter, dog fouling, and vandalism
- Poor upkeep of parks and green areas

Suggested solutions included more bins, community clean-up events, and involving young people in looking after the environment.

Themes continued

Services and Amenities

This theme drew a large amount of feedback, with a strong mix of appreciation and concern. Residents praised:

- Bus services and public transport
- Libraries and community hubs

But also raised concerns about:

- Limited access to GPs, dentists, and toilets
- Issues with pavements, lighting, and parking
- A lack of activities that bring generations together, such as holiday clubs or festive community meals

Teenagers – Concerns and Ideas

Comments in this area were mixed. This was due to the awareness that teenagers were involved in anti-social behaviour, but there wasn't enough for them to do in the area.

Some reflected worries about youth behaviour or a lack of things to do, while others highlighted:

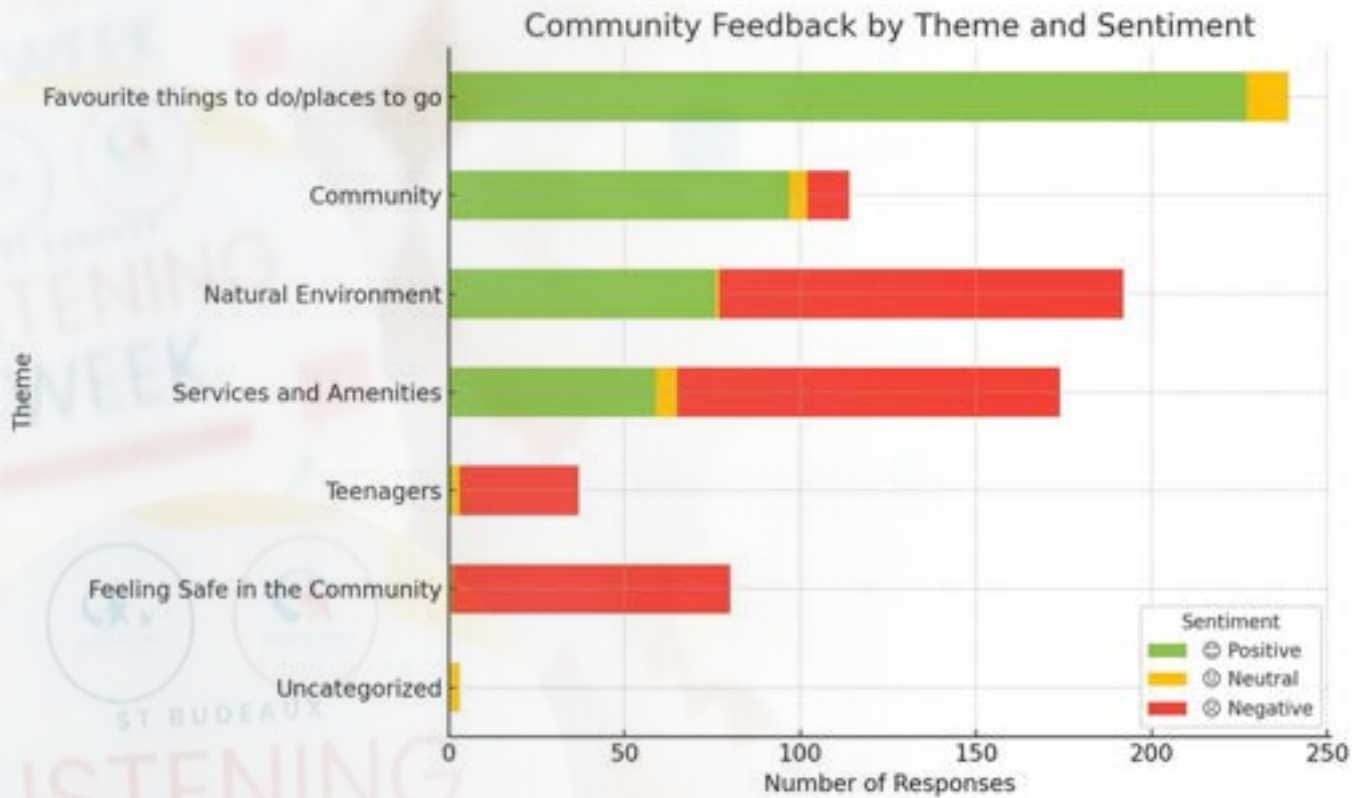
- Youth services that are already helping
- The need for safe spaces for young people to spend time

Feeling Safe in the Community

Residents described experiences of antisocial behaviour, vandalism, and theft. Joggers and drivers were also flagged as inconsiderate, and some people said they avoid walking alone at night. Common suggestions included:

- Improved street lighting
- Safer pedestrian crossings
- More trusted adults visible in the community

Sentiment



The chart above highlights what matters most to people, from friendships, feeling safe, and valued places, to support for young people and care for the environment.

What This Tells Us

Together, these insights provide a valuable starting point for understanding life in St Budeaux and Barne Barton. While the feedback gathered during Listening Week offers a surface-level view, it begins to highlight what's **important** to local people—the things they value, and the issues they would like to see improved. Themes such as **safety, services,** and **support** for young people were raised alongside **appreciation** for green spaces and community connections. This is just the beginning of ongoing conversations. Where possible, it's important that we use this shared understanding to inform action, and work collectively to address some of the challenges raised.

Highlights

While not the full measure of Listening Week's impact, two moments highlighted the deep potential of what can happen when listening becomes a shared, compassionate practice rooted in trust, curiosity, and collective purpose.

Family Impact

One family's experience encapsulated the power of connection through simple, supportive interactions. During Listening Week, they were introduced to:

- Local SEN support groups
- MAST and Barnardo's services
- A youth club—where they now volunteer
- A community food hub—"Tuesdays are now stir-fry night!"

Their story reminded us that even small, accessible touchpoints—like peer groups and drop-ins—can significantly lighten the emotional load families carry. When people are invited into conversations that focus on what matters to them, they begin to take meaningful new actions.

Shared Commitment to the Community

Another key outcome was the level of enthusiasm and collaboration from local stakeholders and partners. Their involvement brought:

- Genuine curiosity and care
- A readiness to listen and take action together
- A deep commitment to the wellbeing of families in the area

This spirit of collective responsibility transformed Listening Week from a temporary initiative into a catalyst for lasting, community-led change. It reinforced our understanding that appreciative inquiry is not only about asking questions—it's about building the relationships and shared ownership that make systemic change possible.



Student voices at the centre: Members of the Primary Student Council from Marine Academy Primary and Ernesettle Community School shared their ideas and priorities during Listening Week—highlighting what matters most to children in their communities.

Considerations

Reflecting on Process and Influence

Listening Week offered a valuable opportunity to connect with the St Budeaux and Barne Barton communities. However, as with any community engagement project, it's important to acknowledge how our approach may have influenced the types of insights we received and those we may have missed.

A key reflection was the challenge of initiating conversations. While many residents were open once approached, relatively few initiated discussions themselves.



Community Volunteers getting warmth in the NHS Research Unit

This may have skewed our data toward the perspectives of those more confident or available during Listening Week, particularly volunteers and individuals already engaged in local services. Conversely, some of the quieter voices—those who might benefit most from being heard—may not have been reached, especially where staff engagement was limited.

Our celebratory event at the end of the week created a noticeable uplift in both engagement and sentiment. People were more willing to share, and responses tended to be more upbeat. This illustrates how the emotional tone of an event—especially one framed around food, connection, and celebration—can shape the data we collect.

We also noticed a shift in tone depending on where people were engaged:



Families queued for ice cream while reflecting on what makes a good day—and what can make it a bad day.

- School-based events tended to produce more positive feedback, likely due to the trusted and familiar setting.
- High street pop-ups saw more critical responses, possibly reflecting a different context, audience, or level of formality.

These reflections suggest that how we listen is just as important as what we hear. Future engagement will benefit from even greater attention to accessibility, consistency across venues, and supporting others to take the lead in sparking conversations. By learning from this process, we can continue to strengthen community dialogue in more inclusive, sustainable ways.

Next Steps



Where Do We Go From Here?

Listening Week was never intended to be a standalone event it was the beginning of an ongoing journey rooted in relationship, reflection, and collective action. As we move forward, our next steps are focused on deepening the momentum we've built and continuing to centre community voices in everything we do.

1. Come Together to Reflect and Respond Our first step is to come together as a collective—school staff, stakeholders, partners, and community members to reflect on what we heard. Listening is only meaningful if it leads to shared understanding and action. We will host internal sessions to explore:

- What do the themes that emerged from Listening Week tell us?
- What are the strengths and needs in our community?
- How can we, together, respond with care and purpose?

2. Co-Create Solutions with the Community In keeping with Appreciative Inquiry's relational and inclusive nature, we are planning a community sharing event. This gathering will be an open space where we can:

- Share the stories and insights gathered during Listening Week
- Celebrate the strengths and values that emerged
- Invite community members to help co-create solutions and next steps

This is not just about consultation, it's about building community-led change. It is often in the collective sharing and discussion of stories that new images and possibilities emerge.

3. Strengthen and Sustain Our Listening Culture We are committed to embedding the skills and spirit of compassionate listening into our everyday practice. This means:

- Continuing professional development for staff to grow as empathetic, non-judgmental listeners
- Encouraging ongoing dialogue across our schools and community
- Creating regular opportunities for people to be heard and supported
- Consider what an annual event might look like

As more people become involved in listening and storytelling, we deepen trust, uncover new ideas, and strengthen our role as relational, inclusive institutions at the heart of the community.

This next chapter is about listening not just with ears, but with openness, intention, and shared responsibility. When we create spaces where every voice matters, we don't just gather information we grow together.