Cheshire West & Chester Council

Council Housing Management Consultation Feedback

Background to the survey

This report summarises the findings of the future management of council housing consultation. The consultation aimed to assess tenant and stakeholder preferences, identify key priorities, and evaluate experiences with the current housing arrangements.

Respondents were asked to choose between two options:

- **Option A: Housing owned and managed by the Council, but the repairs and maintenance service are delivered by an external specialist contractor.**

- **Option B: Housing owned by the Council and is managed by a registered provider**

The consultation engaged tenants, leaseholders, and stakeholders across Cheshire West and Chester, ensuring a broad and inclusive range of views.

How the survey was carried out

To encourage a good response to the consultation, and ensure independence in the process, the Council asked J&M Consulting to carry out the consultation on the Councils behalf. A range of engagement methods were used to maximise the opportunities for tenants, leaseholders and stakeholders to respond to the consultation as follows:

- Online questionnaire was available from the Council consultation webpage, which allowed respondents to provide their views and comments.
- A hard copy of the consultation summary and questionnaire which included a free post return envelope was hand delivered to all the Council`s 5,300 tenants and leaseholders.
- Two press releases which promoted the consultation were sent to local media outlets, one at the consultation launch and a second two weeks before the closing date.
- On average between two and three social media posts took place for each week of the consultation.
- A promotional email was sent to all those tenants and leaseholders with an email address at the launch, midway point and two weeks prior to the closing date.
- Details of the consultation were sent to key stakeholders such as the Poverty Truth Commission, Homeless Reduction Board, Cheshire West Citizens Advice etc.
- An A4 sized poster was produced and distributed in key locations around Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford including: community venues and church notice boards, ASDA notice boards in Ellesmere Port and Winsford, Council Offices in

- Ellesmere Port and Winsford, Civic Hall in Ellesmere Port, as well as libraries and leisure centres.
- A dedicated telephone number and email address was made available for respondents to discuss any questions they had about the consultation.
- Nine face-to-face events took place throughout the consultation period including six drop-in events held in Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford as well as representation at three Council held Let`s Talk events in Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford.
- A number of councillors with Council housing in their wards undertook door knocking campaigns to encourage tenants to have their say.
- ForHousing visiting officers spoke with tenants to encourage participation
- At the start of the consultation a Member Briefing was sent to all councillors with Council housing in their wards detailing the consultation.
- To encourage tenant participation in the consultation, all respondents had the opportunity to agree to be entered into a prize draw.

Headline findings

The Council Housing management consultation took place from Monday 23 September up to and including Sunday 15 December 2024. The formal consultation resulted in 915 respondents providing feedback, which represents a 16% response rate broken down as follows:

- 846 respondents completed the survey consisting of 543 online responses and 303 paper surveys
- 49 respondents attended one of the nine face-to-face events
- 20 stakeholders completed the stakeholder survey

The consultation asked respondents to indicate which of the above options they preferred with the results as follows:

- 75% of respondents preferred option A – Housing owned and managed by the Council, but the repairs and maintenance service are delivered by an external specialist contractor.
- 25% of respondents preferred option B - Housing owned by the Council and is managed by a registered provider.

Key messages – a summary of the main findings

The key messages to emerge from the consultation, were as follows:

- Three quarters of respondents (75%) preferred option 2 homes being directly managed by the Council with repairs outsourced to external contractors.
- Respondents wished to see continuous improvement in service delivery
- Accountability of the management organisation was important to tenants
- Tenants also felt that a review of the delivery model provided an opportunity to look again at the way in which services are delivered.
- Experience of the organisation and a priority focus on the management of their homes was important to tenants.
- A significant portion of respondents expressed optimism that a new delivery model could lead to further improvements to customer service, repair timelines, and accountability.
- A number of respondents expressed confidence that tasks such as repairs, tenancy management, and contractor oversight could be delivered well in future.
- Tenants wished to ensure adequate resources were available for the management of their homes and that there is sufficient capacity within the management organisation.
- Positive outcomes and timely repairs were important to tenants, as were quality workmanship and improvements to communal areas.
- The management organisation should be reliable and efficient, and offer good value for money, especially in the areas of repairs and maintenance.

The conclusion to be drawn from the key messages is that the majority of comments reflect a desire for continuous improvement in service delivery, and that high levels of skill, expertise and capacity exist within the organisation(s) delivering the management and maintenance of their homes.

Detailed findings from the survey

The following pages detail the specific responses to the consultation questions as well as any key messages arising from respondent feedback.

Q1. Type of customer

Table 1: Type of Customer

Type of customer	Response percent	Response total
I am a tenant (I pay rent)	95%	773
I am a leaseholder (I own my house and pay an annual service charge)	5%	42
I rent a garage from the Council	4%	29
Base for percent = 844		

The above table shows that the majority of respondents 95% (773) were Council tenants with a futher 5% (42) being a leaseholder and the remaining 4% (29) renting a garage.

Q2. Length of time as a tenant or leaseholder

The length of time people had been tenants or leaseholders ranged from two months to 31 years with the average being 14 years.

Q3. Preferred option for housing management

Table 2: Preferred option for housing management

Preferred option	Response percent	Response total
Option A: Owned by the Council but managed by a newly contracted housing association	25%	195
Option B: Council-owned and directly managed by the Council with repairs outsourced to external contractors.	75%	583
Base for percent = 778		

The above table shows that 75% (583) of respondents selected Option 2: Council ownership with outsourced repairs, and 25% (195) of respondents selected option 1: Council ownership with management by a new housing association.

Respondents were asked to provide reasons for their choice with the key messages being as follows:

Option A - Owned by the Council but managed by a newly contracted housing association

- Many respondents felt that a newly contracted housing association would be able to provide continuously improving services.
- Some respondents supported outsourcing management to an experienced and reliable housing association.
- Some respondents felt that communication, accountability, and efficiency in property management and repairs were important, and a newly contracted housing association could deliver this.

Option B: Council-owned and directly managed by the Council with repairs outsourced to external contractors.

- Many respondents believe the Council is better equipped to provide accountability, quality service, and value for money.
- Some respondents felt that services would be better aligned to the Councils corporate plan.
- Several respondents felt that outsourcing repairs and maintenance would need to be closely monitored by the Council to ensure a good service is provided.

Q4. Importance of different housing service measures

Chart 1. Important housing service measures

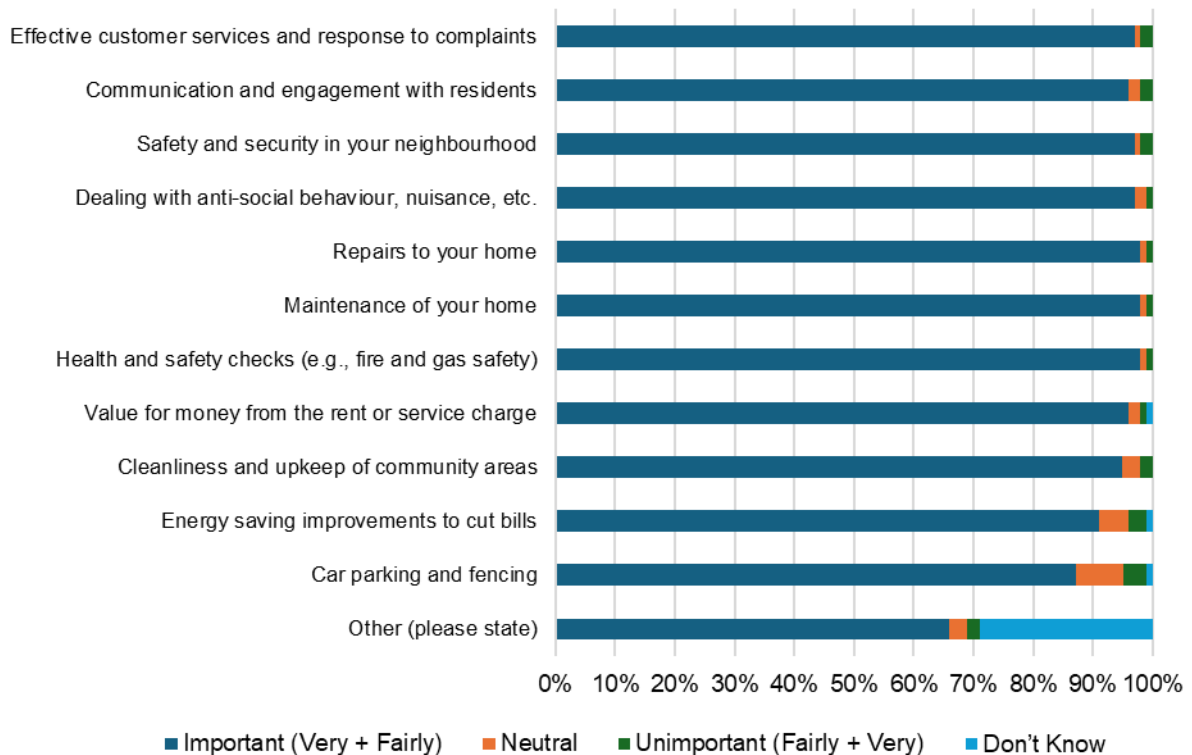**How important are the following measures to you?**

Table 3. Important housing service measures

Housing Service Measures	Important (Very and Fairly)	Neutral	Unimportant (Fairly and Very)	Don't Know	Total
Effective customer services and response to complaints	97% (784)	1% (11)	2% (8)	0% (3)	806
Communication and engagement with residents	96% (772)	2% (19)	2% (10)	0% (1)	802
Safety and security in your neighbourhood	97% (779)	1% (8)	2% (12)	0% (2)	801
Dealing with anti-social behaviour, nuisance, etc.	97% (770)	2% (12)	1% (11)	0% (2)	795
Repairs to your home	98% (785)	1% (5)	1% (10)	0% (1)	801
Maintenance of your home	98% (787)	1% (4)	1% (11)	0% (1)	803
Health and safety checks (e.g., fire and gas safety)	97% (782)	1% (9)	1% (10)	0% (3)	804
Value for money from the rent or service charge	96% (770)	2% (16)	1% (11)	1% (4)	801
Cleanliness and upkeep of community areas	95% (755)	3% (23)	2% (17)	0% (3)	798
Energy saving improvements to cut bills	92% (734)	5% (36)	3% (18)	1% (7)	795
Car parking and fencing	88% (682)	8% (59)	4% (29)	1% (11)	781
Other (please state)	66% (160)	3% (8)	2% (5)	29% (70)	243

Key Insights about the importance of different housing services:

Top priorities - Repairs and maintenance of homes, dealing with anti-social behaviour, and safety/security measures are highly rated, with 97-98% of respondents considering them important.

Lower priorities - Car parking, fencing, and "Other" measures have comparatively lower importance, though still rated highly by 66-88% of respondents

Summary of 'Other' suggested measures from respondents:

Respondents provided a wide range of additional measures that highlighted their priorities, concerns, and expectations for housing services. These measures have been grouped into the following key themes:

- **Quality of repairs:** Ensuring repairs are done completed right first time without any time delays.
- **Proactive maintenance:** Addressing issues before they escalate, such as roof repairs, potholes, and fences.
- **Outstanding repairs:** Calls to reduce long wait times for repairs, particularly mould, damp issues, and roof damage.
- **Workmanship standards:** Improving the quality and speed of maintenance services.

- **Communal areas:** Regular upkeep of communal spaces, including grass cutting, litter removal, street lighting and verges.
- **Roads and footpaths:** Maintenance of pavements, potholes, and traffic calming measures.
- **Playgrounds and parks:** Calls for updated and maintained spaces for children.
- **Neighbourhood upkeep:** Improved weed control, rubbish removal, and cleaning alleyways.
- **Respect and accountability:** Respondents wanted to be treated with dignity, feel valued, and have accountability from housing officers.
- **Communication:** Improved follow-up on repairs and issues, face-to-face interaction, and a single point of contact.
- **Community engagement:** Involving tenants in decision-making and fostering a sense of community.
- **Disability adaptations:** Ensuring properties meet the needs of disabled tenants, including modern kitchens and bathrooms.
- **Vacant property standards:** Bringing vacant homes to acceptable standards before re-letting.
- **Easier modifications:** Allowing tenants to make accessibility changes efficiently.
- **Local housing priority:** Prioritising local families and preventing overcrowding.
- **Rent concerns:** Requests for fair rent calculations and affordability for leaseholders.
- **New Council homes:** Building more affordable housing for local families.
- **Anti-social behaviour:** Addressing neighbour disputes and problem tenants.
- **CCTV and surveillance:** Installing cameras for improved safety.
- **Street lighting:** Enhancing lighting to improve safety at night.

Q5 Tenant Satisfaction Measures questions asked during the consultation

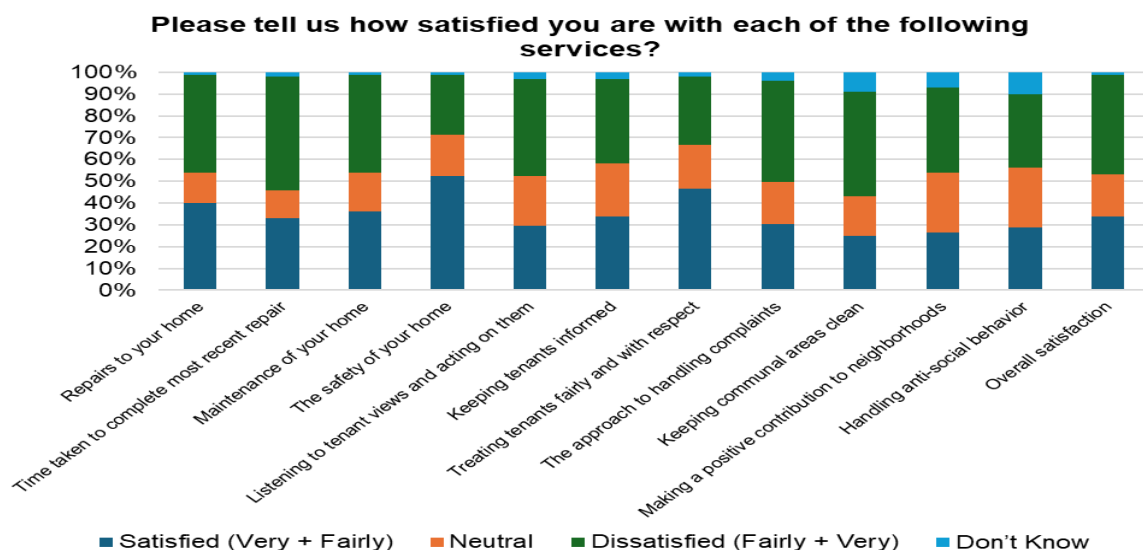Chart 2. Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Table 4. Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Satisfied (Very and Fairly)	Neutral	Dissatisfied (Fairly and Very)	Don't Know	Total
Repairs to your home	40% (320)	14% (115)	45% (363)	1% (7)	805
Time taken to complete most recent repair	33% (265)	13% (101)	52% (423)	2% (12)	801
Maintenance of your home	36% (285)	18% (140)	45% (360)	1% (9)	794
The safety of your home	53% (411)	19% (151)	28% (219)	1% (7)	788
Listening to tenant views and acting on them	30% (229)	23% (179)	45% (346)	3% (27)	781
Keeping tenants informed	34% (271)	24% (188)	39% (313)	3% (24)	796
Treating tenants fairly and with respect	46% (368)	20% (159)	31% (250)	2% (14)	791
The approach to handling complaints	30% (240)	19% (146)	46% (368)	4% (33)	787
Keeping communal areas clean	25% (194)	18% (140)	48% (375)	9% (72)	781
Making a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	26% (207)	27% (214)	38% (301)	7% (58)	780
Handling anti-social behaviour	29% (219)	28% (218)	34% (265)	10% (77)	779
Overall satisfaction	34% (253)	19% (139)	46% (345)	1% (9)	746

Key Insights from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures – responses provided from the consultation:

- 45% of respondents were either fairly or very dissatisfied with repairs to their home.
- 52% of respondents were either fairly or very dissatisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair.
- 45% of respondents were either fairly or very dissatisfied with the maintenance of their home.
- 53% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the safety of their home.
- 45% of respondents were either very or fairly dissatisfied that their landlord listened to their views and acted on them.
- 39% of respondents were either very or fairly dissatisfied that they were kept informed.
- 46% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied that they were treated fairly and with respect.
- 46% of respondents were either very or fairly dissatisfied with the approach to handling complaints.
- 48% of respondents were either very or fairly dissatisfied with the maintenance of communal areas.
- 38% of respondents were either very or fairly dissatisfied that their landlord made a positive contribution to neighbourhoods.

- 34% of respondents were either very or fairly dissatisfied with how anti-social behaviour was handled.

Q6 Support and services customers want to see more of.

Chart 3. Support and/or services in the future

What support and / or services would you like to see more of in the future?
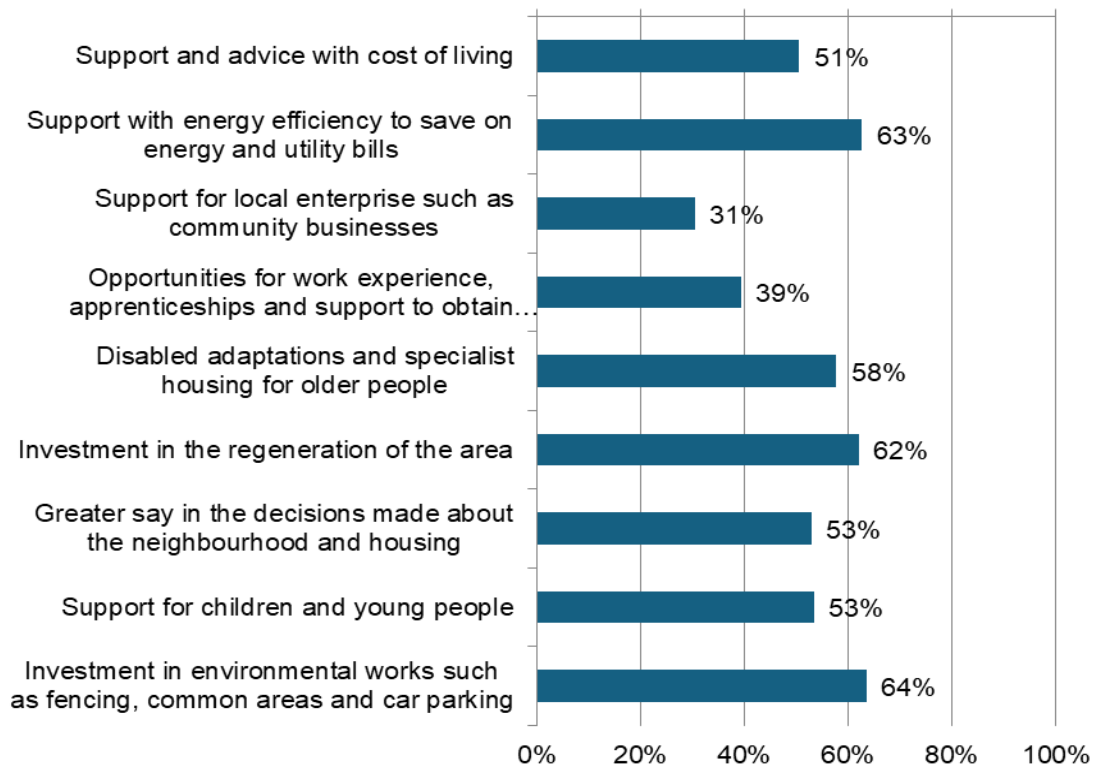
Answer Choices	%	Responses
Support and advice with cost of living	51%	
Support with energy efficiency to save on energy and utility bills	63%	
Support for local enterprise such as community businesses	31%	
Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and support to obtain…	39%	
Disabled adaptations and specialist housing for older people	58%	
Investment in the regeneration of the area	62%	
Greater say in the decisions made about the neighbourhood and housing	53%	
Support for children and young people	53%	
Investment in environmental works such as fencing, common areas and car parking	64%	

Table 5. Support and/or services in the future

What support and / or services would you like to see more of in the future?		
Answer Choices	**Responses**	
Support and advice with cost of living	51%	382
Support with energy efficiency to save on energy and utility bills	63%	473
Support for local enterprise such as community businesses	31%	230
Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and support to obtain paid work	39%	297
Disabled adaptations and specialist housing for older people	58%	436
Investment in the regeneration of the area	62%	468
Greater say in the decisions made about the neighbourhood and housing	53%	399
Support for children and young people	53%	403
Investment in environmental works such as fencing, common areas and car parking	64%	479
Other: see summary of comments below	7%	56
Base for percent = 754		

Key Insights:

Respondent's top priorities were as follows:

- **Investment in environmental works (e.g. fencing, common areas, car parking):** 64% (479 respondents) highlighted the need for improvements in external spaces and infrastructure, reflecting dissatisfaction with the current state of communal and outdoor areas.
- **Support with energy efficiency (e.g., saving on energy and utility bills):** 63% (473 respondents) identified energy efficiency as a priority, emphasising concerns about rising energy costs and inefficient housing.
- **Investment in regeneration of the area:** 62% (468 respondents) stressed the importance of area redevelopment, indicating a desire for cleaner, safer, and better-maintained neighbourhoods.

Respondent's mid-priorities were as follows:

- **Disabled adaptations and specialist housing for older people:** 58% (436 respondents) called for better housing adaptations to meet the needs of older and disabled tenants.
- **Greater say in decision-making and support for children and young people:** 53% (399 and 403 respondents, respectively) expressed the need for more tenant involvement in decisions and support for younger residents.
- **Support and advice with cost of living:** 51% (382 respondents) reflected concerns about affordability and rising living costs.

Respondent's lower priorities were as follows:

- **Opportunities for work experience and apprenticeships:** 39% (297 respondents) requested support with employment opportunities and skills development.
- **Support for local enterprises (e.g. community businesses):** 31% (230 respondents) highlighted the need to encourage local businesses and economic growth.

Other suggestions - 7% (56 respondents) proposed additional services which have been summarised below:

- **Community events:** Low-cost or free community-led events to bring residents together and foster a sense of community.
- **Youth services:** Establishing youth clubs and activities to provide positive outlets for children and teenagers.
- **Social groups:** Social activities, including clubs for autistic people and older tenants, to reduce isolation.
- **Parking solutions:** A significant number of respondents emphasised the need for more car parking spaces, driveways, and solutions to muddy, turfed-up areas used for parking.

- **Footpaths and pavements:** Repairing poorly maintained pavements and preventing vehicles from blocking them, particularly for wheelchair and mobility scooter users.
- **Grass cutting and hedge maintenance:** Improved upkeep of grass verges, hedges, and communal areas to maintain cleanliness and visual appeal.
- **Fencing:** Requests for fencing in open-plan gardens to improve security and deter misuse, such as dog fouling and play activities.
- **Tree maintenance and planting:** Better maintenance of overgrown trees and planting flowers and shrubs instead of weeds to enhance green spaces.
- **Dog bins and litter management:** Adding bins and increasing litter removal to address cleanliness issues.
- **Affordable homes:** Calls for more affordable, social housing, especially for disabled individuals.
- **Maintenance teams:** Suggestions to establish an in-house maintenance team for quicker and better-quality repairs.
- **Repairs and adaptations:** Residents requested timely repairs (e.g., fences, communal areas, solar panel installations) and improved allocation of housing adapted for disabled tenants.
- **Tenant involvement:** Better communication with tenants about housing changes, property details, and ongoing works.
- **Housing allocation:** A more efficient and transparent system for allocating social housing.

Face to face events

In addition to the online survey, nine face to face events took place across the borough on various dates and times throughout the 12-week formal consultation.   49 respondents attended the nine face to face events and the key messages from their comments were:

- Many participants valued the opportunity to engage in person during the research process but noted that such interactions were uncommon in normal service delivery.
- Delays in completing repairs were frequently mentioned, with frustration often stemming from prolonged waiting periods for resolution.
- Some participants felt that there needed to be more clarity around how repair requests were prioritised as it was felt that simpler repairs were often completed ahead of more critical repairs.
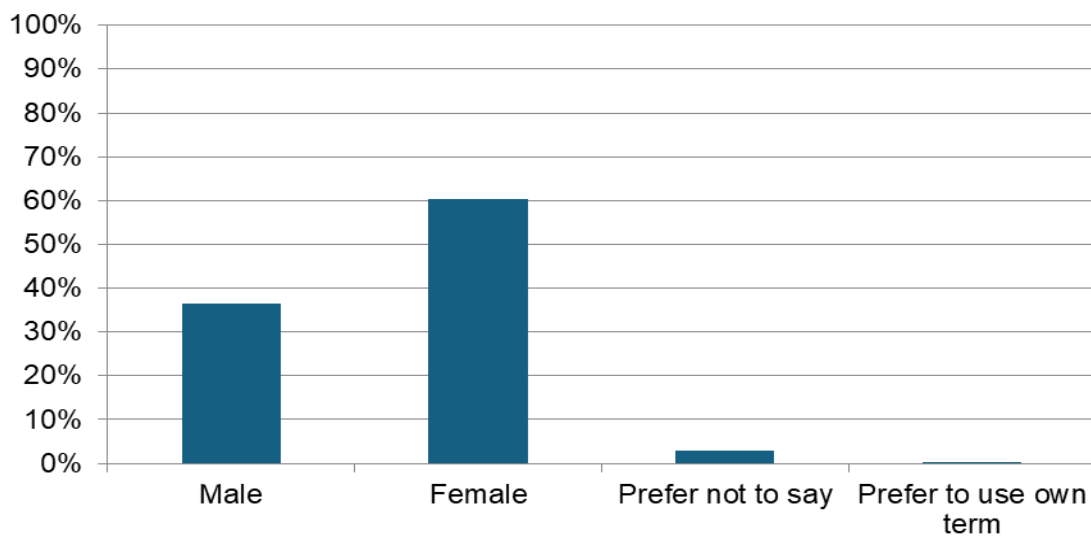
Profile of respondents

Age of respondents
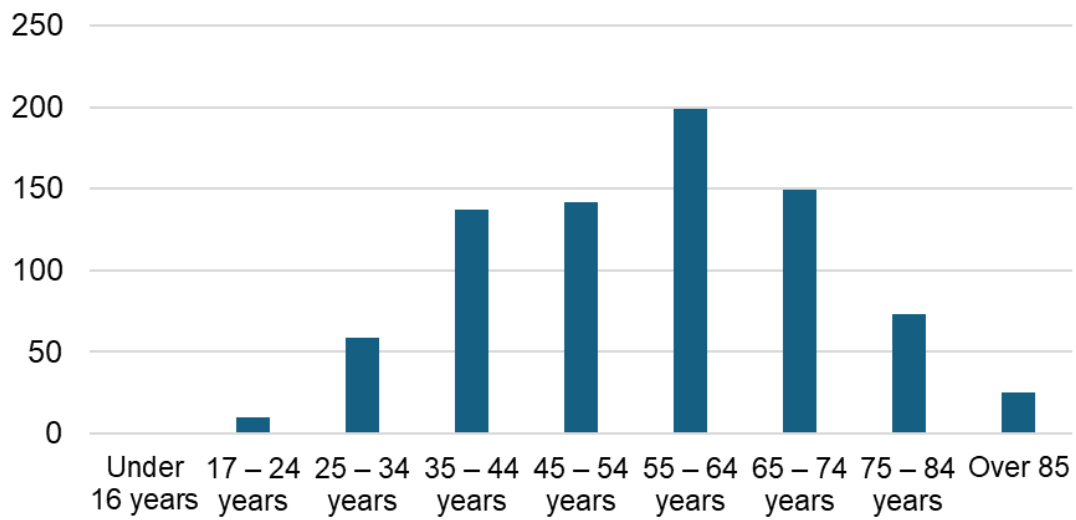
Age	Responses	
Under 16 years	0%	0
17 – 24 years	1%	10
25 – 34 years	7%	59
35 – 44 years	17%	137
45 – 54 years	18%	142
55 – 64 years	25%	199
65 – 74 years	19%	149
75 – 84 years	9%	73
Over 85	3%	25
Base for percent 794		

Gender of respondents

Ethnicity of respondents	Responses	
White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	91%	711
White - Irish	1%	4
White - Any other White background	2%	14
Black or Black British - Caribbean	0%	1
Black or Black British - African	1%	4
Black or Black British - Any other Black background	0%	1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0%	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0%	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0%	0
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	0%	0
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background	0%	1
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1%	5
Mixed - White and Black African	0%	0
Mixed - White and Asian	0%	0
Mixed - Any other Mixed background	0%	1
Other ethnic group - Arab	0%	0
Other ethnic group - Other ethnic group	0%	1
Travelling community - Gypsy/Roma	0%	0
Travelling community - Traveller of Irish descent	0%	0
Travelling community - Other member of the Travelling community	0%	0
Prefer not to say	2%	19
Other (please specify)	2%	16
Base for percent 778		

Survey respondents with a long-term illness, health issue or disability
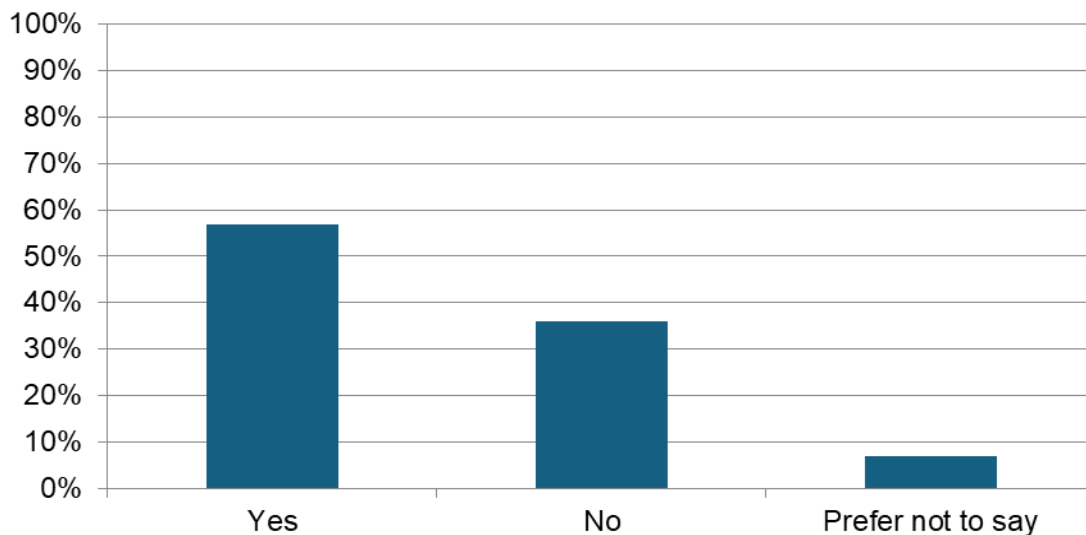
Survey respondents with a long-term illness, health issue or disability:		
Answer Choices	**Responses**	
Yes	57%	428
No	36%	272
Prefer not to say	7%	53
Base for percent 753		

Types of long term illnesses, health issues and disabilities of survey respondents:
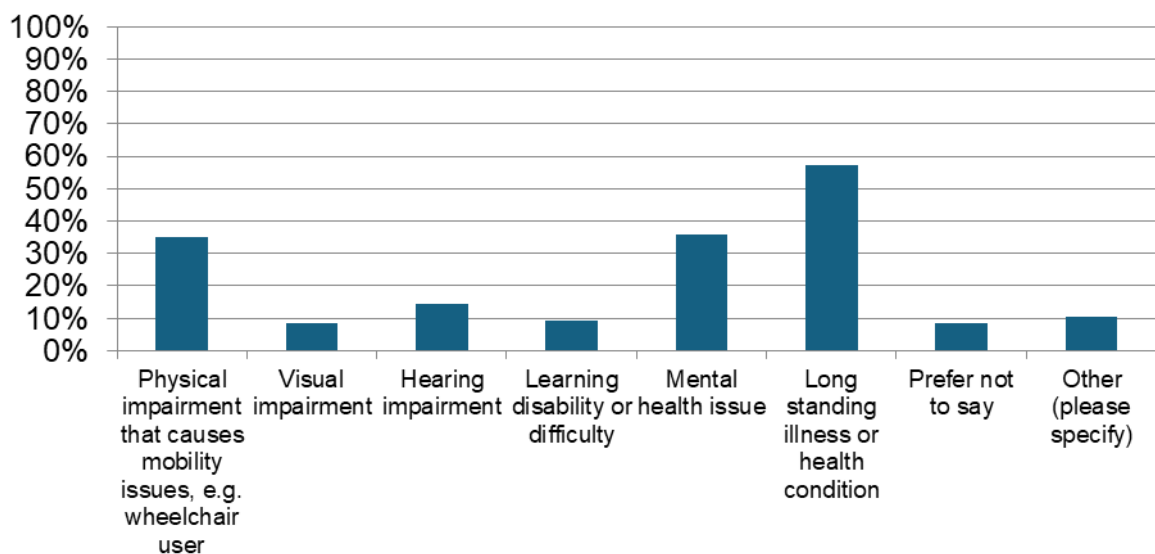
Types of long-term illnesses, health issues and disabilities of survey respondents:	Responses	
Physical impairment that causes mobility issues, e.g. wheelchair user	35%	155
Visual impairment	9%	39
Hearing impairment	14%	62
Learning disability or difficulty	9%	40
Mental health issue	36%	162
Long standing illness or health condition	57%	261
Prefer not to say	8%	41
Other (see summary below)	11%	48
Base for percent 465		