

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SURVEY : OCTOBER 2001
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1. Copy of questionnaire
2. Tables of Results (Separate contents list)
3. Respondents' suggestions for improvements to services

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMUNITY SURVEY : OCTOBER 2001

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

- ◆ In 1998 Darlington Borough Council commenced a programme of community research and consultation covering all aspects of the Council's activities, the overall purpose of which was to inform the development of Best Value initiatives, and to set a context for the evolution of the Council's annual budgets : this survey (1,020 face to face interviews with residents aged 16+ years) is part of that ongoing programme of research and consultation.

Satisfaction with Running the Borough

- ◆ 68.8% of all respondents said that they were satisfied with the way the Council is running the Borough, (8.5% - very satisfied and 60.3% fairly satisfied), and only 12.9% of respondents said that they were dissatisfied, (8.7% fairly dissatisfied, and 4.2% very dissatisfied). 15.9% of respondents gave 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses, and a further 2.4% said 'don't know'.
- ◆ There have been only minor differences in satisfaction levels since the tracking exercise was started in 1998 when overall satisfaction was recorded as 62.9%. However, the current 68.8% satisfaction level is the highest recorded, and shows a small but statistically significant increase over all but one (September 1999) of the previous surveys.

'Better or Worse' at Running the Borough?

- ◆ 11.9% of respondents believed the Council has 'got better' at running the Borough over the last year, whilst 12.1% believed it had 'got worse'. The vast majority (70.6%), however, believed that there had been 'no change'. 5.5% of respondents gave 'don't know' responses. This is a very similar result to the 1998 findings : 13.9% 'better'; '14.1% 'worse' and 64.7% 'no change'.
- ◆ Principal reasons given for believing the Council had 'got better' at running the Borough were 'better cleanliness and/or maintenance' (41.3%), and 'improved safety/ security c.c.t.v. etc. (23.1%). Other aspects referred to here by more than 8% (10 respondents) of those who felt things had got better, were 'flowers, parks, green spaces' (13.2%), 'road & pavement

maintenance' (9.1%), and 'information/ consultation' (8.3%), whilst 9.9% felt things had just 'generally got better'.

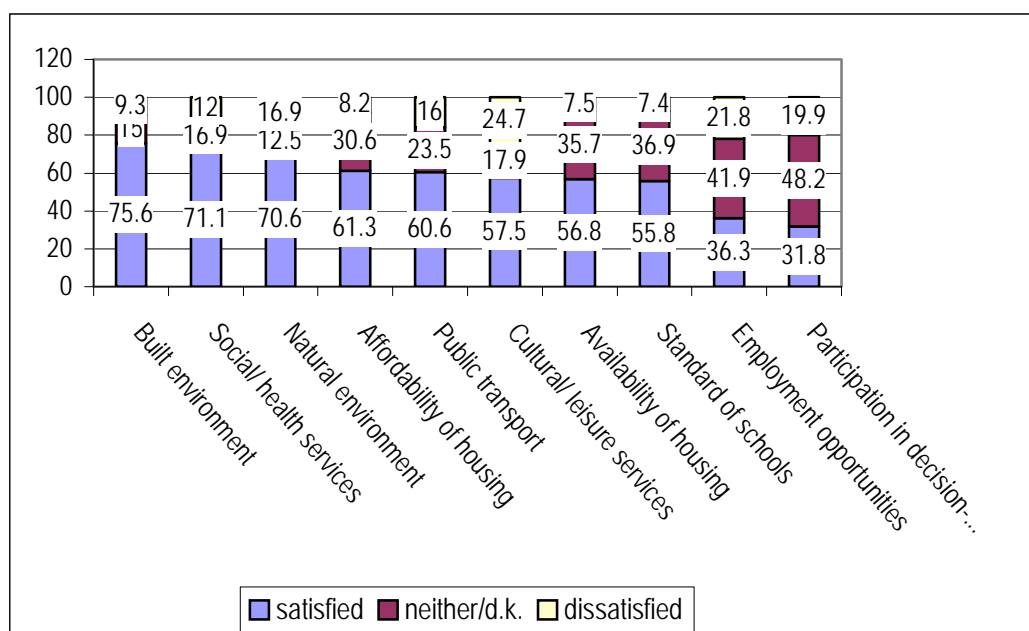
- ◆ Principal reasons given for believing the Council had 'got worse' at running the Borough also related to 'cleanliness and/or maintenance' (35%), and 'crime & security' (19.5%) issues. Other main reasons for a negative perception (mentioned by 10+ respondents) related to 'money wasted/ charges/ costs' (17.1%), 'road & pavement maintenance' (12.2%), and 'speed and efficiency of services' (9.8%).

Local Neighbourhoods

- ◆ Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods was high (79.2%), with 36.9% of respondents saying they were 'very satisfied' and 42.3% that they were 'fairly satisfied'. 16.2% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, whilst 4.2% gave 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses and 0.5% said 'don't know'. Overall satisfaction with the local neighbourhood was very similar to that found in 1998 (79.8%), though there was a small, but statistically significant, increase in dissatisfaction (1998 12%).
- ◆ 30.6% of respondents felt that their neighbourhood had 'got worse' as a place to live, over the past year, whilst just over half (51%) of all respondents felt it had 'had stayed the same'. Only 9.5% felt it 'had got better'. (8.9% gave 'don't know' responses.)
- ◆ 'Crime and vandalism' was the principal aspect referred to when asked in what ways the neighbourhood had got worse (mentioned by 43.6% of all respondents who perceived a negative change), and this was followed by 'problems with neighbours' (33.3%), and 'upkeep/ appearance;' (29.8%). Other aspects referred to by more than 5% of those who perceived a negative change were 'drug and alcohol abuse' (14.7%), 'residential car parking' (9.3%), 'traffic' (7.4%), 'noise' (5.4%), and 'opportunities for leisure' (5.1%).
- ◆ Almost half (47.4%) of those who believed their local neighbourhoods had 'got better' over the past two years referred to improvements in 'upkeep and appearance', with improvements in terms of 'crime/vandalism' (23.7%), and 'better neighbours' (15.5%), being the second and third most frequently mentioned issues.

- ◆ Respondents were asked about satisfaction with various aspects of their local neighbourhoods. Over three-quarters of the sample were satisfied with 'the quality of the built environment' (75.6% satisfied), and over half were satisfied with 'the level of social & health services available' (71.1%), 'the quality and amount of the natural environment' (70.6%), 'affordability of housing' (61.3%), 'the level of public transport services available' (60.6%), 'the level of cultural, recreational and leisure services available' (57.5%), 'the availability of housing' (56.8%), 'the level of cultural, recreational and leisure services available' (55.8%), and 'the standard of schools' (55.8%). Satisfaction was lowest in respect of 'employment opportunities' (36.3%), and 'opportunities to participate in local planning and decision-making processes' (31.8%).

Satisfaction with aspects of local neighbourhood :
% response – all respondents



- ◆ However, overall satisfaction levels with the above, as calculated by a mean satisfaction score, which takes into account both the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction (very or fairly) and the number of respondents expressing an opinion, were highest in respect of 'Standard of Schools', with 'Built Environment' and 'Availability of Housing' in second and third places. 'Opportunities to participate in local planning & decision making processes' or 'Employment opportunities' received the lowest overall satisfaction rating.

Community Safety

- ◆ The overwhelming majority (96.1%) of respondents felt 'safe' when outside alone in their local neighbourhood during the day (60.7% 'very safe' + 35.4% 'fairly safe', and only 3.4% felt 'unsafe' (0.5% 'don't know'). In all areas of the Borough less than 5% of respondents reported feeling unsafe in their local neighbourhood. Fewer respondents reported feeling safe when outside alone in their own neighbourhood after dark : 20.9% of all respondents reported feeling 'very safe', and a further 42.8% feeling 'fairly safe' (63.7% 'safe'), whilst 17.3% felt 'slightly unsafe' and 10.8% felt 'very unsafe' (28.1% unsafe). (8.2% gave a 'don't know' response.)
- ◆ The great majority (93.2%) of respondents also felt 'safe' when outside alone in the town centre during the day (51.3% 'very safe' + 41.9% 'fairly safe'), and only 4.5% felt 'unsafe' (2.4% 'don't know/ don't go out alone'). However, only 29.3% reported feeling 'safe' in the 'town centre after dark' (6.9% 'very safe' + 22.4% 'fairly safe'), whilst 42.4% reported feeling 'unsafe' (25.9% 'slightly unsafe' + 16.5% 'very unsafe'), and 28.4% gave 'don't know/don't go out alone here ' responses.

Pollution

- ◆ 'Road traffic' was perceived as the greatest noise pollutant, mentioned by a third (33.5%) of all respondents as a problem : by 9.8% as a 'serious problem', and by a further 23.7% as a 'problem, but not serious'.
- ◆ 'Aircraft' (19.5% problem – 3.7% 'serious' + 15.8% 'not serious'), 'neighbours' (15.6% problem – 5.5% 'serious' + 10.1% 'not serious'), and 'road works' (11.6% problem - 2.3% 'serious' + 9.3% 'not serious) were the only other noises rated as a problem by in excess of one in ten respondents.

Accessing Services

- ◆ The great majority of respondents reported no difficulties in reaching major services. The services most difficult for respondents to get to using their usual form of transport were 'recycling facilities' (12.7% difficult), 'G.P./ Doctor's Surgery' (10.7%), and 'Local Hospital'

(9.9%). Four other services were also reported as being difficult to reach by in excess of 5% of all respondents – these were 'Bank/ Cash Point' (7.8%), 'Council Office' (7.7%), 'Sports Centre' (7.4%), and 'Library' (6.3%).

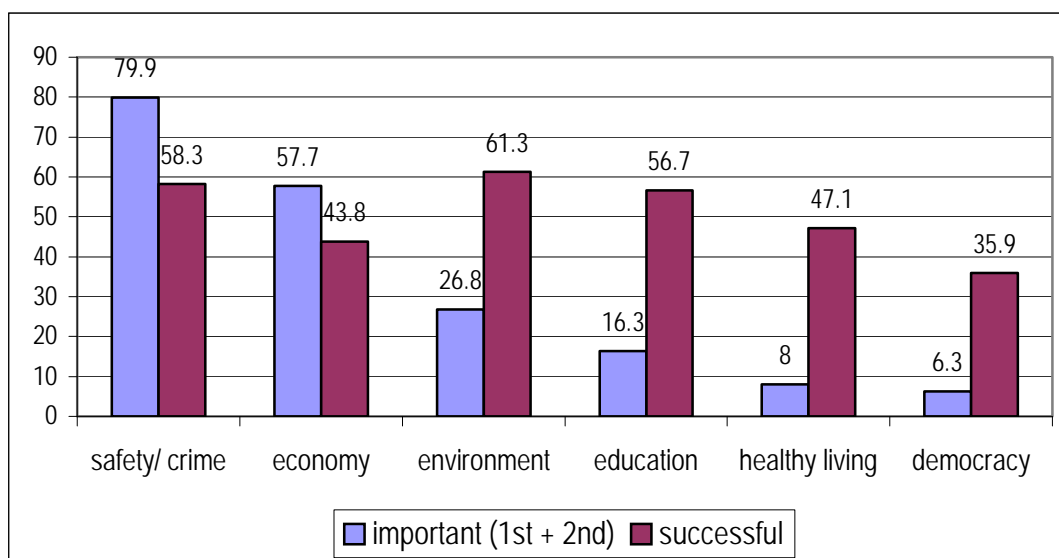
- ◆ The services most easily accessible are 'Local shops' (79.3% very easy to get to) and 'Post Offices' (72.1% very easy). Other services which a majority of respondents reported as being 'very easy' to get to using their usual form of transport were 'Shopping Centre or Supermarket' (64.2%) and 'Park or green space which can be used by the public', (57.4%).

Most Important Issues facing Council

- ◆ The majority of respondents believe that 'promoting community safety and reducing crime' is the most important issue facing the Council : 60.8% of respondents believe this is the 'most important' issue, and a further 19.1% that it is the '2nd most important' issue.
- ◆ 'Improving the local economy and creating jobs' was voted the second most important issue by the overall sample, but was some way behind, being referred to by only 22.5% as the 'most important' and 35.2% as the '2nd most important'.
- ◆ 'Supporting healthy living' (1.8% most + 6.2% 2nd most), and 'involving residents in local democracy' (2.3% most + 4% 2nd most), were rated by the total sample as the least important issues listed, both being referred to by less than 10% of the sample as one of the two most important issues.
- ◆ The majority of respondents believe the Council is successful in 'maintaining and enhancing the environment' (8.8% very + 52.5% fairly), 'promoting community safety and reducing crime' (4.7% very + 53.6% fairly), and in 'supporting educational achievement' (8.6% very + 48.1% fairly). Less than a half of respondents saw the Council as successful in 'supporting healthy living' (4.4% very + 42.7% fairly), and 'improving the local economy and creating jobs' (3.5% very + 40.3% fairly), 'involving residents in local democracy' (3.1% very + 32.8% fairly).
- ◆ Comparisons with responses from the 1998 Community Survey suggest that perception of Council success has changed very little over the last three years, with the only statistically

significant difference being in respect of 'improving the local economy and creating jobs', which showed a small increase from 37.1% in 1998 to 43.8% in 2001.

Most Important Issues & Perceived Council Success in dealing with them
(% response – all respondents)



Council Services

- ◆ Services about which more than three-quarters of all respondents expressed satisfaction were 'upkeep & appearance of the town centre' (86.8% satisfied), 'street lighting' (86.4%), 'refuse collection' (85.7%), 'security, incl. c.c.t.v. in the town centre' (85.4%), 'Civic Theatre' (84.1%), 'signposting: (81%), libraries & museums (78.2%), the Dolphin Centre (77.7%), and 'festivals and events' (76.6%).
- ◆ Services about which a quarter or more of all respondents expressed dissatisfaction were 'road maintenance and repairs' (43.2% dissatisfied), 'pavement maintenance' (40%), children's play areas (33.2%), 'car parking in the town centre' (31.4%), 'youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (28.1%), and 'car parking in residential areas' (25%).
- ◆ The highest overall satisfaction levels (as calculated by the 'mean' score which takes into account both the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, where 1 = very satisfied, and 5 = very dissatisfied, and the varying level of don't know responses) were achieved by 'civic theatre' (mean 1.69), 'security in the town centre' (1.76), 'upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (1.83), 'refuse collection' (1.85), 'arts centre' (1.89), 'libraries & museums' (1.89), 'festivals and events' (1.89), 'street lighting' (1.92), 'the Dolphin Centre' (1.93), and 'nursery & primary schools' (1.96).

- ◆ Lowest satisfaction levels (as calculated by mean scores) were reported in respect of 'youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (3.22), 'road maintenance', (3.18), 'children's play grounds' (3.14) and ('pavement maintenance' (3.09).
- ◆ The majority of services showed some increase in net satisfaction since 1998, with these increases being substantial in respect of 'pavement maintenance' and 'road maintenance' (where 'net' satisfaction increased by 31.3% and 22.8% respectively).
- ◆ Other services which achieved an increase in 'net' satisfaction in excess of 10% were 'arts centre' (+ 11.0%), 'council tax administration and collection' (+ 11.0%) and 'car parking in the town centre' (+ 11.0%).
- ◆ Only five services showed a decrease in net satisfaction since 1998, and only two of these represented statistically significant changes. 'Social care for older and vulnerable people' showed a marked decrease in overall satisfaction level, with net satisfaction decreasing by 13.4%, whilst net satisfaction with the 'upkeep & appearance in the town centre', although receiving the third highest overall satisfaction score, showed a small but significant decrease (- 7.9%) in net satisfaction.
- ◆ Services with the highest usage, and which more than one fifth (20%) of respondents reported that they or members of their household used were the 'Dolphin Centre' (51.3%), 'Car parking in the Town Centre' (42.2%), 'Civic Theatre' (41.4%) 'Libraries and Museums' (38%), 'festivals and events' (24.8%), 'nursery and primary schools' (23.9%), 'car parking in other areas' (23%), 'Arts Centre' (22.4%), and 'Other sports facilities' (21.7%).
- ◆ The least used services (used by less than 10%) were 'Housing & Council Tax benefits' (9.7%), 'Youth Clubs and other facilities for young people' (5.8%), 'social care for older and vulnerable people' (5.2%), and 'planning and control of development' (2.8%). 5.3% of respondents reported not using any services.

- ◆ For most services, overall satisfaction levels (as calculated by 'mean' satisfaction scores) amongst users was somewhat higher than amongst all respondents, the only exception here being in respect of 'social care for older and vulnerable people', 'planning and control of development' and 'car parking in residential areas' which showed small negative differences.
- ◆ Satisfaction amongst users of services was highest in respect of the 'civic theatre' (1.47 mean), 'festivals & events' (1.54) and 'Arts Centre', and was lowest amongst users of 'social care for older & vulnerable people' and users of 'children's play areas'.

Priorities for Improvement

- ◆ 'Social care for older and vulnerable people' was believed to be the service most in need of improvement – mentioned by 10.8% of all respondents as the first priority for improvement. 'Youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (8.2%) was the second most mentioned service in this respect (1st priority), followed by 'road maintenance and repairs' (7.6%), 'parks and open spaces' (7.3%), 'nursery and primary schools' (7%).
- ◆ When first and second priorities for improvements are added together 'social care for older and vulnerable people' is still the top priority, mentioned by 19.4% of all respondents. Two other services were mentioned as priorities (1st or 2nd) by in excess of 15% of all respondents; these were 'youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (16.8%) and 'road maintenance and repairs' (15.4%).
- ◆ The main suggested improvements or comments relating to the above three services were :

'Social care for older and vulnerable people'

- Comments on the close 'programme' for care homes with respondents generally being very concerned about this
- Funding of care in own homes to be a priority

'Youth clubs and other facilities for young people'

- Requirements for the provision of more facilities, opportunities and clubs specifically to keep young people off the streets and to act as a 'diversion' from crime and/or drug and alcohol abuse
- Young people appear to be viewed as 11+ years

Road maintenance and repairs

- Comments on potholes, the need to improve surfaces and to avoid 'patching'
 - Regular checks and speedier maintenance required
- ◆ Other services mentioned as 1st or 2nd priorities by more than 10% of respondents – 'parks & open spaces' (12.5%), 'security measures incl. c.c.t.v. in other areas' (12.1%), 'secondary school's' (11.9%), 'nursery and primary schools' (10.7%), 'car parking in the town centre' (10.5%), and 'children's play areas' (10.3%).
- ◆ Over 60% of respondents did not mention a service on which they felt that Council spending could be reduced : 'don't know' (29.8%); 'none' (35.3%). The service mentioned most frequently as the one on which spending could be reduced was 'the upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (8.5% of all respondents). Other services referred to by more than 2% of all respondents in this respect were 'festivals and events' (3.4%), 'Council Tax administration and collection' (2.9%), 'road maintenance and repairs' (2.9%), 'Council housing' and 'housing and Council Tax benefits', (both 2.6%).

Access to the Council

- ◆ Just over half (52.5%) of all respondents had contacted the Council with an enquiry during the last year : 41% '1 – 4 times', 9.2% '5 – 10 times', and 2.3% 'more than 10 times'. 'Telephone' was the principal method used for contacting the Council (used by 81.7% of all those who had had contact in the previous year), and this was followed by 'visit to the main council office' (22.6%, 'letter', (14%), and 'visit to local office' (9.2%).
- ◆ The great majority (86.4%) of respondents who had contacted the Council in the past year reported that it had 'been easy to find contact details', only 10.1% said this 'had not been easy' (3.6% 'can't remember'). Respondents who had a long term illness or disability were most likely to say that this had 'not been easy' (15.5%).
- ◆ The great majority (87.9%) of respondents were prepared to 'telephone' the Council if they needed to contact in the future. However, fewer respondents were prepared to use other methods of contact, with the only other methods mentioned here by more than a quarter of all respondents 'visit main offices' (38.9%), and 'letter' (25.7%). Only 14.6% were prepared to use 'e-mail' (though this rose to 21.6% amongst 25-44 year olds), 13.2% to 'visit a local

office', whilst less than 10% were prepared to make contact 'via a Councillor' (7.7%), or 'via the Council web-site' (6.2%), or 'by having a home visit' (5.7%).

- ◆ Almost three-quarters (74.9%) of all respondents believed that the present opening times of council buildings were 'adequate', whilst 21.6% believed they were 'inadequate', and 3.5% did not have an opinion.
- ◆ Additional opening hours deemed to be most useful by the overall sample were 'later opening times' (47.3% most useful) and 'Saturday opening' (43.6% most useful).

Access to the Personal Computer and Internet at Home

- ◆ Over half (54.6%) of the total sample reported having access to a 'personal computer' at home, and 45.3% have access to the 'internet'. 13.6% of those who currently do not have access to the internet at home thought it was 'very likely' that they would have this access in the next two years, and a further 14.5% thought that this would be 'likely'.

Travel to School

- ◆ 324 respondents had one or more children of school age, and between them they had a total of 534 children who attended school. 'Walking' was principal mode of transport, both to and from school for all of these children, though slightly fewer walked to school (56.4%), than home from school (57.8%). This trend was reversed for the second main transport mode – 'car', by which 22.2% of children usually travelled to school, whilst only 20.1% were taken home from school by car. 'School buses' and 'other buses' were each used by around 10% of all children, for both travelling to and from school. Only 1.6% of children used a bike for travelling to or from school.

Citizens' Panel

- ◆ 40.5% of all respondents said they were willing to become members of the Citizens Panel.

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SURVEY : OCTOBER 2001

A. BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

A.1 In 1998 Darlington Borough Council commenced a programme of community research and consultation covering all aspects of the Council's activities, the overall purpose of which was to inform the development of Best Value initiatives, and to set a context for the evolution of the Council's annual budgets : this survey is part of that ongoing programme of research and consultation.

A.2 Specific objectives of the survey were to gather information relating to :

- 2.1 Satisfaction with Council overall, and reasons for any dissatisfaction
- 2.2 Satisfaction with local area, and reasons for any dissatisfaction
- 2.3 Perceived changes over last year – in way Council running the Borough, and in local area
- 2.4 Satisfaction with particular aspects of local neighbourhood
- 2.5 Perceived safety of local neighbourhood and town centre
- 2.6 Concern about noise pollution
- 2.7 Ease of access to services
- 2.8 Most important issues, and perception of Council success in dealing with these issues
- 2.9 Satisfaction with specific Council Services
- 2.10 Usage of Council Services
- 2.11 Services Priorities
- 2.12 Frequency and method of contact with Council during past year
- 2.13 Adequacy of opening times of Council Buildings
- 2.14 Access to personal computer and internet at home
- 2.15 Mode of transport for travel to/from school for school-aged children
- 2.16 Willingness to become member of Citizens' Panel

B. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Survey Methodology

- B.1 Face-to-face interviews were conducted during October and November 2001, using a structured questionnaire, with 1020 residents of Darlington Borough who were aged 16 years and over.
- B.2 In order to track changes in residents opinions over time, many (but not all) of the questions were the same as, or similar to, those included in the 1998 Community Survey. A copy of the questionnaire (marked up with the overall sample results) is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- B.3 Interviewing took place in all Wards of the Borough, with the number of interviews conducting in each Ward being proportionate to the population therein. Age, gender and working status quotas were applied in order to ensure that the sample was representative of the Borough in terms of these variables.
- B.4 In order to avoid interviews being carried out solely within one location in a ward, randomised starting points were selected for the interviewers, and no more than eight interviews were carried out from any random location starting point. Only one interview was conducted per household.
- B.5 All interviewing was conducted in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. Interviewers showed respondents NWA Identity Cards, and letters from the Council which explained the nature of the research. Respondents were also given an NWA free-phone telephone number for contact if they had any queries.

Analysis

- B.6 The data was analysed using the statistical package SPSS 10.0. Tables were produced, for all questions, showing counts and percentages for the total Borough, and for the following sample sub-groups : area, age, gender, tenure, occupation of chief wage earner, number of cars in household, whether anyone in household has long-term illness/disability, and household type. These tables are included as Appendix 2 .

Geographical Areas

B.7 For analysis purposes the Borough was divided into six geographical areas :

1. South East

Bank Top
Central
Eastbourne North
Eastbourne South
Lascelles
Lingfield
Park East

2. South West

College
Hummersknott
Park West

3. North East

Harrowgate Hill
Haughton East
Haughton West
Northgate North
Northgate South
North Road

4. North West

Cockerton East
Cockerton West
Mowden
Pierremont

5. Rural

Heighington
Hurworth
Middleton St. George
Sadberge
Whessoe

Sampling Error

B.8 All sampling is liable to sampling error: this is based on both the size of the sample and the level of response to individual questions. An estimation of potential sampling error at the 95% Confidence level is given below for the total sample, and for all sample sub-groups. Estimations are based on a 50%/50% split in response, and a 10%/90% split. As an example, if 50% of the total sample said they were 'satisfied' with a particular aspect, we estimate with 95% Confidence that between % and % (50% \pm %) of the total adult Darlington are satisfied with that same aspect.

Sampling Error : 95% Confidence Intervals for sample sub-groups

		Count	50%/50%	10%/90%
			+ %	+ %
Area	South East	283	5.8	3.5
	South West	108	9.4	5.7
	North East	291	5.7	3.4
	North West	203	6.9	4.1
	Rural	135	8.4	5.1
Age	16 to 24 years	154	7.9	4.7
	25 to 44 years	356	5.2	3.1
	45 to 64	313	5.5	3.3
	65+ years	197	7.0	4.2
Gender	male	497	4.4	2.6
	female	523	4.3	2.6
Tenure	owner occupied	801	3.5	2.1
	rented from the Council	133	8.5	5.1
	rented other	82	10.8	6.5
Occupation chief wage earner	AB (Professional/ Managerial)	152	7.9	4.8
	C1 (Other White Collar)	313	5.5	3.3
	C2 (Skilled Manual)	259	6.1	3.7
	DE (Semi/Unskilled /Benefits)	296	5.7	3.4
Car/van in household	yes - 1	498	4.4	2.6
	yes - more than 1	312	5.5	3.3
	no	210	6.8	4.1
Long term illness/disability	yes - self	147	8.1	4.8
	yes - other h'hold member	119	9.0	5.4
	no	754	3.6	2.1
Household	no children	603	4.0	2.4
	with children	417	4.8	2.9
Household	children under 5 years	139	8.3	5.0
	no children under 5 years	881	3.3	2.0
Household	children 5 - 17 years	357	5.2	3.1
ALL RESPONDENTS		1020	3.1	1.8

C. PROFILE OF SAMPLE

(Appendix 2, pages 126 to 141 refer)

The great majority (80%) of respondents had lived in the Darlington area 'more than ten years', whilst 7.9% had lived in the area 'six to ten years', 9.8% 'one to five years' and only 2.3% 'less than a year, though more than three months'.

48.7% of respondents were 'male' and 51.3% 'female'.

15.1% of respondents were aged '16-24 years', 34.9% '25-44 years', 28.1% '45 years to retirement age (59 years females and 64 years males)', and 21.9% 'retirement age' (60+ years females / 65+ years males).

Over two-thirds of the sample were economically active : 38.8% in full-time employment (30+ hours per week), 22.4% in 'part-time' employment, 4.8% self-employed, 1.7% 'on a government scheme' and 0.5% registered unemployed. The remainder were : 'not in paid employment – seeking work' (0.6%), 'looking after house/children etc' (4.8%) 'suffering from a long term illness or disability' (1.7%), 'in full time education' (2.3%), or 'retired'.

59.1% of respondents lived in a 'household without children'. 13.6% lived in a household 'with children under five years', and 35% lived in a household 'with children aged between five and seventeen years'.

26.1% of respondents reported that they (14.4%) and/or another member of their household (14.1%) 'suffered from a limiting long term illness or disability'.

Just over one-in-five (20.6%) of respondents 'did not have a car' in the household; 48.8% had 'one car or van', and 30.6% had 'more than one car or van'.

21% of respondents lived in 'rented' property (13% from the Council, and 8% from other landlords), whilst 78.5% were 'owner-occupiers' (0.4% 'other tenure').

D. RESEARCH FINDINGS :

1. SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY THE COUNCIL IS RUNNING THE BOROUGH

1.1 Overall satisfaction

Q.1 : 'Thinking about Darlington Borough Council. Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the Council is running the Borough ?
(Appendix 2, page 1 refers)

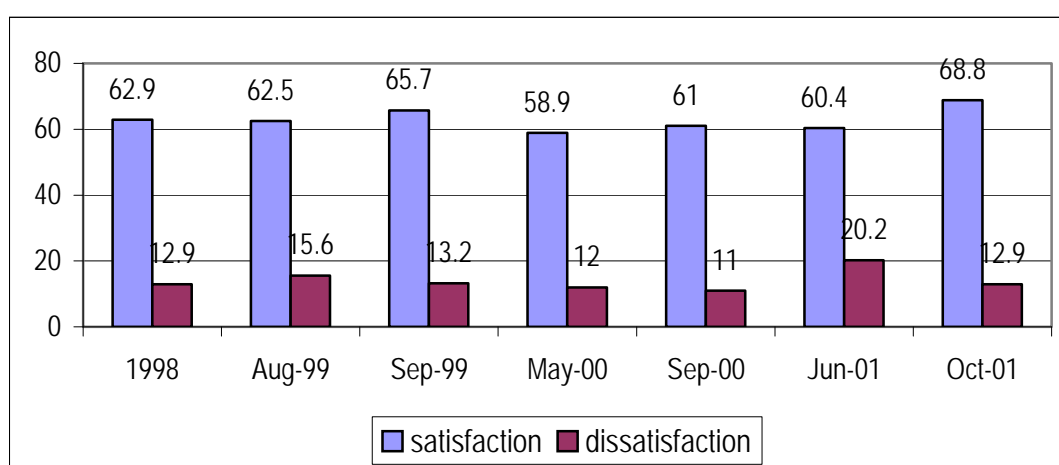
- 1.1.1 The above question has been included in several previous surveys undertaken by the Council and acts as a 'tracking' question.
- 1.1.2 68.8% of all respondents said that they were satisfied with the way the Council is running the Borough, (8.5% - very satisfied and 60.3% fairly satisfied), and only 12.9% of respondents said that they were dissatisfied, (8.7% fairly dissatisfied, and 4.2% very dissatisfied). 15.9% of respondents gave 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses, and a further 2.4% said 'don't know'.
- 1.1.3 There have been only minor differences in satisfaction levels since the tracking exercise was started in 1998 when overall satisfaction was recorded as 62.9%. However, the current 68.8% satisfaction level is the highest recorded, and shows a small but statistically significant increase over all but one (September 1999) of the previous surveys.
- 1.1.4 The current level of dissatisfaction (12.9%) is in line with, and not significantly different from, those recorded during the five surveys carried out during 1998, 1999 and 2000. It is, however, significantly smaller than the 20.2% dissatisfaction reported earlier this year (Citizens Panel Survey June 2001 - 20.2% dissatisfaction). This suggests that the June Survey result was 'atypical', though the reasons for this are not obvious and may be due to a particular issue pertinent only at that time.

It is possible that dissatisfaction with the Council amongst the population at large did for some reason (perhaps negative media reporting) rise sharply and subsequently fall during the 2001, though no particular issue was referred to as a reason for dissatisfaction. It is also possible that the questionnaire content (which was concerned

largely with 'crime' and the 'local economy') had a negative influence on perceptions, but again these issues were not given as reasons for dissatisfaction.

1.1.5 The Citizens Panel was also, in June 2001, due for renewal, and it is also possible, though we think not likely, that this could have resulted in an atypically dissatisfied sample. (And there is also, of course, the possibility that particularly bad weather in June could have made respondents more discontent.)

Satisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough
% response – all respondents



1.1.6 Satisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough was highest in the North West (73.4%) and lowest in the South West (60.2%). Satisfaction was lowest amongst young people (16-24 years – 58.5% satisfied), though over a third of these young people gave either 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' or 'don't know' responses. Dissatisfaction was highest amongst older respondents ('45+ year olds' over 17% dissatisfaction).

1.2 Perceived changes over the last year

Q.2 : *'And over the past year or so, do you think Darlington Council has got better or worse at running the Borough, or has it stayed about the same ?'*

Q.3 : *'In what ways do you think it has got better (worse)?'*

(Appendix 2, pages 2 to 3 refer)

- 1.2.1 11.9% of respondents believed the Council has 'got better' at running the Borough over the last year, whilst 12.1% believed it had 'got worse'; the vast majority (70.6%), however, believed that there had been 'no change'. 5.5% of respondents gave 'don't know' responses. This is a very similar result to the 1998 findings : 13.9% 'better'; '14.1% 'worse' and 64.7% 'no change'.
- 1.2.2 Residents living in the North West (16.8% better) were most likely to think the Council 'had got better' at running the Borough over the past year, and those living in the South East and North West most likely to think it had 'got worse' (both areas 14.8% 'worse').
- 1.2.3 Respondents suffering from a long term illness or disability had the most negative perception of change in the Council's performance over the last year – only 8.8% thought it had 'got better', whilst 19.7% thought it had 'got worse'.
- 1.2.4 Principal reasons given for believing the Council had 'got better' at running the Borough were 'better cleanliness and/or maintenance' (41.3%), and 'improved safety/ security c.c.t.v. etc. (23.1%). Other aspects referred to here by more than 8% (10 respondents) of those who felt things had got better, were 'flowers, parks, green spaces' (13.2%), 'road/pavement maintenance' (9.1%), and 'information/ consultation' (8.3%), whilst 9.9% felt things had just 'generally got better'.
- 1.2.5 Principal reasons given for believing the Council had 'got worse' at running the Borough also related to 'cleanliness and/or maintenance' (35%), and 'crime & security' (19.5%) issues. Other main reasons for a negative perception (mentioned by 10+ respondents) related to 'money wasted/ charges/ costs' (17.1%), 'road & pavement maintenance' (12.2%), and 'speed and efficiency of services' (9.8%).

2. SATISFACTION WITH LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD

2.1 Overall satisfaction

Q.4 : 'Thinking now about this neighbourhood. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live ?'

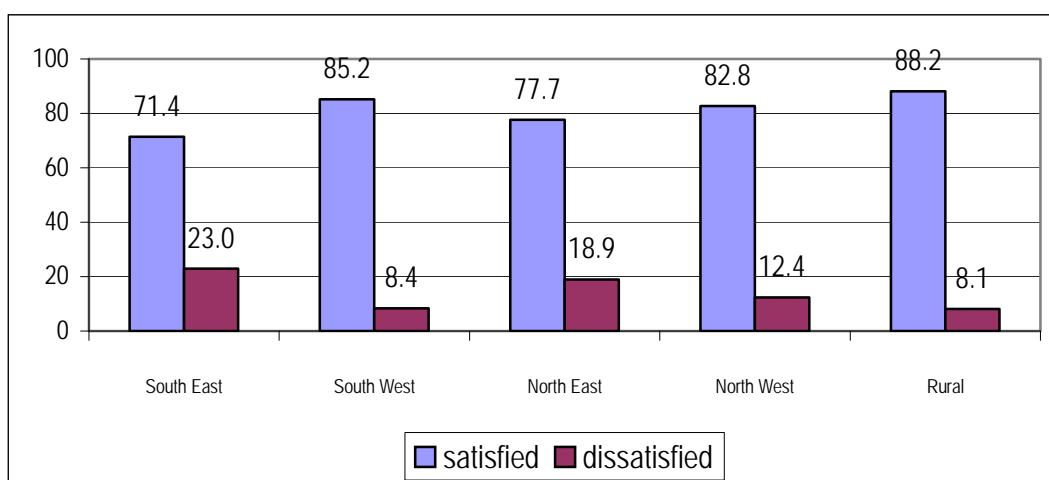
(Appendix 2, page 4 refers)

Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods was high (79.2%), with 36.9% of respondents saying they were 'very satisfied' and 42.3% that they were 'fairly satisfied'. 16.2% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction (11.5% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 4.7% 'very dissatisfied'), whilst 4.2% gave 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses and 0.5% said 'don't know'.

Overall satisfaction with the local neighbourhood was very similar to that found in 1998 (79.8%), though there was a small, but statistically significant, increase in dissatisfaction (1998 12%).

Satisfaction with the local neighbourhood ranged from 71.4% in the South East to 88.2% in Rural areas. Conversely, dissatisfaction ranged from 8.1% in Rural Areas to 23% in the South East.

Satisfaction with local neighbourhood as a place to live
% response – by area



2.2 Perceived changes over the last year

Q.5 : 'And over the past year or so, do you think your neighbourhood has got better or worse ?'

Q.6 : 'In what ways do you think it has got better (worse)?'

(Appendix 2, pages 5 to 11 refer)

2.2.1 30.6% of respondents felt that their neighbourhood had 'got worse' as a place to live, over the past year, whilst just over half (51%) of all respondents felt it had 'had stayed the same'. Only 9.5% felt it 'had got better'. (8.9% gave 'don't know' responses.)

2.2.2 There were some variations by area, with respondents living in the South West being least likely to perceive a change (77.8% 'stayed same'), though in all areas respondents were much more likely to refer to a negative change than to a positive change. Respondents who lived in Council properties were also much more likely than others to perceive a change in their local neighbourhood over the past year (17.3% 'better' : 36.8% 'worse' : 38.3% 'stayed the same').

2.2.3 'Crime and vandalism' was the principal aspect referred to when asked in what ways the neighbourhood had got worse (mentioned by 43.6% of all respondents who perceived a negative change), and this was followed by 'problems with neighbours' (33.3%), 'upkeep/ appearance;' (29.8%). Other aspects referred to by more than 5% of those who perceived a negative change were 'drug and alcohol abuse' (14.7%), 'residential car parking' (9.3%), 'traffic' (7.4%), 'noise' (5.4%), and 'opportunities for leisure' (5.1%).

2.2.4 On an area basis, principal reasons given for the opinion that the local neighbourhood had got worse were : (*% based on those who said area had got worse*)

South East

- 'problems with neighbours' (43.2%); 'crime/vandalism' (40.0%)

South West

- 'upkeep/appearance' (42.1%); 'crime/vandalism'/ 'car parking' (both 26.3%)

North East

- 'crime/vandalism;' (49.5%); 'problems with neighbours' (37.1%),
'upkeep/appearance' (30.5%)

North West

- 'crime/vandalism' (40%) ; 'upkeep/appearance', 'problems with neighbours' both (32.3%)

Rural Area

- 'crime/vandalism' (53.6%) ; 'new developments' (21.4%)

- 2.2.5 Almost half (47.4%) of those who believed their local neighbourhoods had 'got better' over the past two years referred to improvements in 'upkeep and appearance', with improvements in terms of 'crime/vandalism' (23.7%), and 'better neighbours' (15.5%), being the second and third most frequently mentioned issues (as only a small percentage of respondents perceived a change for the better, the above three issues were the only ones mentioned as improvements by in excess of ten respondents).

2.3 Satisfaction with particular aspects of local neighbourhood

Q.7 : *'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following issues in your neighbourhood ?'*

(Appendix 2, pages 12 to 21 refer)

2.3.1 Availability of Housing

56.8% of respondents expressed satisfaction with 'availability of housing' (12.9% 'very satisfied' + 43.9% 'fairly satisfied', and 7.5% expressed dissatisfaction (5.2% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 2.3% 'very satisfied'). 13.7% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 22% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

Respondents living in the South East (66.4%) were most satisfied, and those living in Rural areas least satisfied (38.5% satisfied/ 16.3% dissatisfied). Other groups who expressed greatest dissatisfaction here were those living in 'Council housing' (18.1% dissatisfied) or 'other rented' properties (17.1%), those 'with children under 5 years' (16.6%), and those with 'long term illness or disabilities' (13.6%) were other sample sub-groups

2.3.2 Affordability of Housing

61.3% of respondents expressed satisfaction with 'affordability of housing' (10.3% 'very satisfied' + 51.0% 'fairly satisfied', and 8.2% expressed dissatisfaction (6.3% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 1.9% 'very dissatisfied'). 13.4% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 17.2% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

As for 'affordability of housing', respondents living in the South East (71.7%) were most satisfied, and those living in Rural areas least satisfied (40.7% satisfied/ 16.3% dissatisfied). Respondents living in 'private rented' accommodation were much more likely than others to express dissatisfaction with 'affordability of housing' (25.6% dissatisfied).

2.3.3 Employment Opportunities

Only 36.3% of respondents expressed satisfaction with 'employment opportunities' (5.4% 'very satisfied' + 30.9% 'fairly satisfied', whilst 21.8% expressed dissatisfaction (16.9% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 4.9% 'very dissatisfied'). 17.7% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 24.2% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

Satisfaction with 'employment opportunities' was lowest in the Rural areas, where only 23.7% of respondents expressed 'satisfaction', and 28.1% expressed 'dissatisfaction'. Respondents living in 'rented' accommodation were much more likely than others to express dissatisfaction with 'employment opportunities' (Council 29.3% : private 40.3%), as were those 'with children under 5 years' (30.2%) and those who in the 'DE occupational grouping' (skilled, semi-skilled or benefits only) (29.4%). Age differences (between those below retirement age) were relatively minor, whilst the majority of 65+ year olds did not express an opinion.

2.3.4 Quality & amount of natural environment, e.g. countryside, wildlife

70.6% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'natural environment' (15.7% 'very satisfied' + 54.9% 'fairly satisfied', and 16.9% expressed dissatisfaction (12.9% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 4.0% 'very dissatisfied'). 10.5% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 2% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

Respondents living in the Rural areas (82.2% satisfied) most satisfied with the 'natural environment', and those living in the North East most dissatisfied (22.3% dissatisfied).

2.3.5 Quality of built environment, e.g. town centre, housing industrial estates

75.6% of respondents expressed satisfaction with 'built environment' (13.1% 'very satisfied' + 62.5% 'fairly satisfied'), and 9.3% expressed dissatisfaction (7.6% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 1.7% 'very dissatisfied'). 12.5% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 2.5% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

Satisfaction with the 'built environment' ranged from 84.1% in the South East down to only 60.2% in the South West, though differences between areas in dissatisfaction levels were not significant. Differences between tenure sub-samples were not significant.

2.3.6 Level of Social & Health Services Available

71.1% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'level of social & health services available' (15.3% 'very satisfied' + 55.8% 'fairly satisfied', whilst 12% expressed dissatisfaction (8.5% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 3.5% 'very dissatisfied'). 11.5% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 5.4% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

Satisfaction levels ranged from 76% in the South East down to 60.2% in the South West, though differences in 'dissatisfaction' between areas were minimal, ranging only between 11.1% and 12.6%. Other sub-group differences were also minimal here, with dissatisfaction not exceeding 15% in any sub-group.

2.3.7 Level of cultural, recreational & leisure services available

57.5% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'level of cultural, recreational & leisure services available' (12.4% 'very satisfied' + 45.1% 'fairly satisfied', whilst 24.7% expressed dissatisfaction (16.5% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 8.2% 'very dissatisfied'). 12.1% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 5.8% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

Satisfaction levels ranged from 71.2% in the South West down to 47.4% in Rural areas, with those living in the South West (8.3% dissatisfied) being much less likely than those from other areas (22% - 29.9%) to express dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction here was highest, reaching just over 30%, amongst those in 'private rented' and 'Council' accommodation, those in 'DE occupational grouping' and those 'with children under five years'.

2.3.8 Standard of schools

55.8% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'standard of schools' (16.1% 'very satisfied' + 39.7% 'fairly satisfied', whilst 7.4% expressed dissatisfaction (5.3% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 2.1% 'very dissatisfied'). 12.3% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 24.6% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

Satisfaction was highest amongst those with school aged children in the household (5 – 17 years) : 77% satisfied/ 11.2% dissatisfied. Differences between areas in satisfaction levels were not significant.

2.3.9 Level of public transport services available

60.6% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'level of public transport services available' (16.6% 'very satisfied' + 44% 'fairly satisfied', whilst 16% expressed dissatisfaction (9.3% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 6.7% 'very dissatisfied'). 11.1% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 12.4% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.

Dissatisfaction with the level of public transport services was highest, and exceeded 20% in the Rural areas (23.7%), and amongst those 'living in Council property' (21.1%), those 'without a car in the household' (21.1%), and those 'with a long term illness or disability' (23.8%).

2.3.10 Opportunities to participate in local planning & decision making processes

Only 31.8% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'opportunities to participate in local planning & decision making processes' (3.6% 'very satisfied' + 28.2% 'fairly satisfied', whilst 19.9% expressed dissatisfaction (9.2% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 10.7% 'very dissatisfied'). The largest proportion of respondents (48.2%), however, gave either 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (24.9%) or 'don't know/no opinion' (23.3%) responses, and this rose to over 60% amongst '16-24 year olds'.

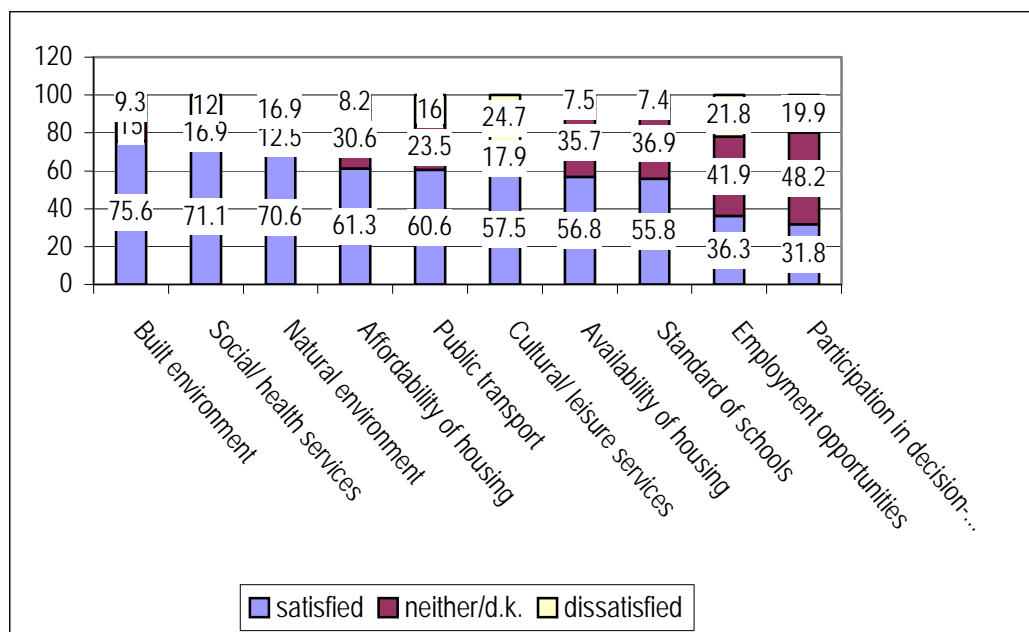
Respondents living in properties 'rented from the Council' (46.7% satisfied), and those living in the South East (41.7%) were most likely to be satisfied with this aspect of life in their local neighbourhood.

2.6.11 Summary

As displayed in the Chart below, expressed satisfaction over all the sample was highest in respect of 'the quality of the built environment' (75.6% satisfied), 'the level of social & health services available' (71.1%), and 'the quality and amount of the natural environment' (70.6%), 'affordability of housing' (61.3%), 'the level of public transport services available' (60.6%), 'the level of cultural, recreational and leisure services available' (57.5%), 'the availability of housing' (56.8%), and 'the standard of schools' (55.8%). Satisfaction was lowest in respect of 'employment opportunities' (36.3%), and 'opportunities to participate in local planning and decision-making processes' (31.8%).

However, overall satisfaction levels, as calculated by a mean satisfaction score, which takes into account both the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction (very or fairly) and the number of respondents expressing an opinion, were highest in respect of 'Standard of Schools', with 'Built Environment' and 'Availability of Housing' in second and third places'.

Satisfaction with aspects of local neighbourhood :
% response – all respondents



Satisfaction with aspects of local neighbourhood :
All Respondents :Mean Satisfaction Scores

(1 = very satisfied : 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied : 5 = very dissatisfied)
(Note : highest mean scores denotes lowest satisfaction level)

	mean
Standard of schools	2.17
Quality of built environment, e.g. town centre, housing industrial estates	2.20
Availability of housing	2.23
Level of social & health services available	2.25
Affordability of housing	2.26
Quality & amount of natural environment, e.g. countryside, wildlife	2.33
Level of public transport services available	2.38
Level of cultural, recreational & leisure services available	2.61
Employment opportunities	2.80
Opportunities to participate in local planning & decision making processes	2.94

'Opportunities to participate in local planning & decision making processes' or
'Employment opportunities' received the lowest overall satisfaction rating in all five areas
of the Borough.

Satisfaction with aspects of local neighbourhood :
Mean Satisfaction Scores by Area

(1 = very satisfied : 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied : 5 = very dissatisfied)
(Note : highest mean scores denotes lowest satisfaction level)

	S.E.	S.W.	N.E.	N.W.	Rural	TOTAL
Availability of housing	2.24	2.07	2.20	2.13	2.59	2.23
Affordability of housing	2.22	2.28	2.14	2.24	2.65	2.26
Employment opportunities	2.81	2.43	2.85	2.74	3.12	2.80
Quality & amount of natural environment	2.43	2.24	2.47	2.37	1.87	2.33
Quality of built environment	2.13	2.29	2.14	2.27	2.30	2.20
Level of social & health services available	2.24	2.26	2.27	2.31	2.15	2.25
Level of cultural, recreational & leisure services available	2.52	2.11	2.71	2.80	2.71	2.61
Standard of schools	2.42	1.99	2.17	2.13	1.85	2.17
Level of public transport services available	2.47	2.47	2.11	2.39	2.67	2.38
Opportunities to participate	2.81	2.71	3.05	3.11	2.93	2.94

2.4 Perceived safety of local neighbourhood (and Town Centre)

Q.8 : '*Thinking now about how safe you feel when you are outside alone. How safe or unsafe do you usually feel when you are outside alone?*'

(Appendix 2, pages 22 to 15 refer)

2.4.1 Local neighbourhood

The overwhelming majority (96.1%) of respondents felt 'safe' when outside alone in their local neighbourhood during the day (60.7% 'very safe' + 35.4% 'fairly safe', and only 3.4% felt 'unsafe' (0.5% 'don't know'). In all areas of the Borough less than 5% of respondents reported feeling unsafe in their local neighbourhood.

Fewer respondents reported feeling safe when outside alone in their own neighbourhood after dark : 20.9% of all respondents reported feeling 'very safe', and a further 42.8% feeling 'fairly safe' (63.7% 'safe'), whilst 17.3% felt 'slightly unsafe' and 10.8% felt 'very unsafe' (28.1% unsafe). (8.2% gave a 'don't know' response.) Older respondents (52.3% 'safe'), females (54.2% safe), and those 'without a car in the household' (48.1% safe) were least likely to report feeling safe outside alone after dark.

Respondents living in the South East (35.7% unsafe), the North East (30.6% unsafe) and the North West (30.5% unsafe) were most likely to feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood after dark, and those living in the South West (13.9%) Rural areas (14.1%) least likely to feel unsafe.

2.4.2 Town Centre

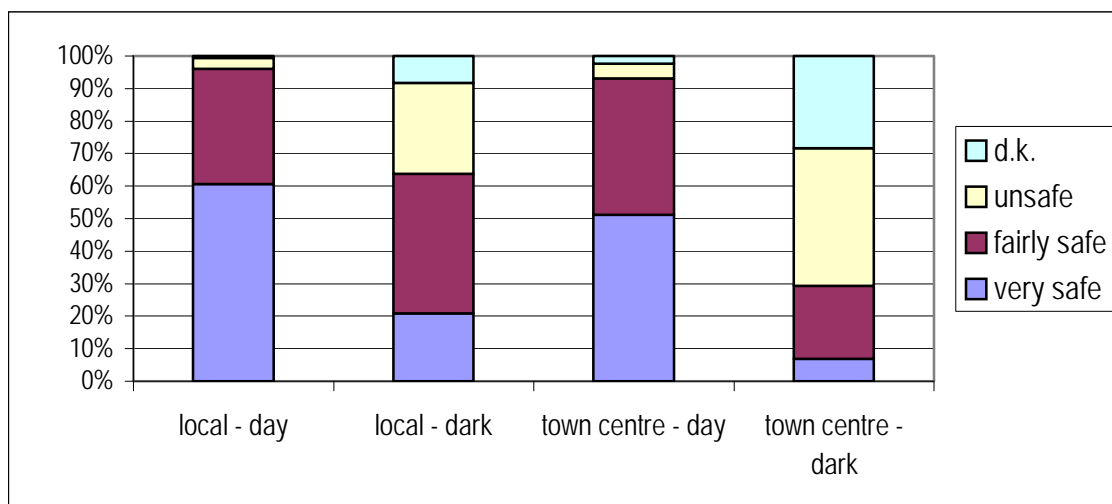
The great majority (93.2%) of respondents also felt 'safe' when outside alone in the town centre during the day (51.3% 'very safe' + 41.9% 'fairly safe'), and only 4.5% felt 'unsafe' (2.4% 'don't know/ don't go out alone').

However, only 29.3% reported feeling 'safe' in the 'town centre after dark' (6.9% 'very safe' + 22.4% 'fairly safe'), whilst 42.4% reported feeling 'unsafe' (25.9% 'slightly unsafe' + 16.5% 'very unsafe'), and 28.4% gave 'don't know/don't go out alone here' responses.

Feelings of safety in the town centre at night decreased significantly with age, with 50.7% of 16-24 year olds reporting feeling 'safe', compared with only 8.1% of '65+ year olds', though the great majority (65%) of these older respondents did not express an opinion

(i.e. gave 'don't know/don't go out alone here' responses). Females (20.1% safe/ 48.7% unsafe) reported feeling less safe here, than did males (38.9% safe / 35.6% unsafe).

'How safe do you feel when you are outside alone
(...in your own neighbourhood/ in the town centre ... after dark/ during the day ?)
(% response – all respondents)



2.5 Noise pollution

Q.9 : 'Noise pollution can be a problem. How would you rate the following types of noise in your neighbourhood ?'

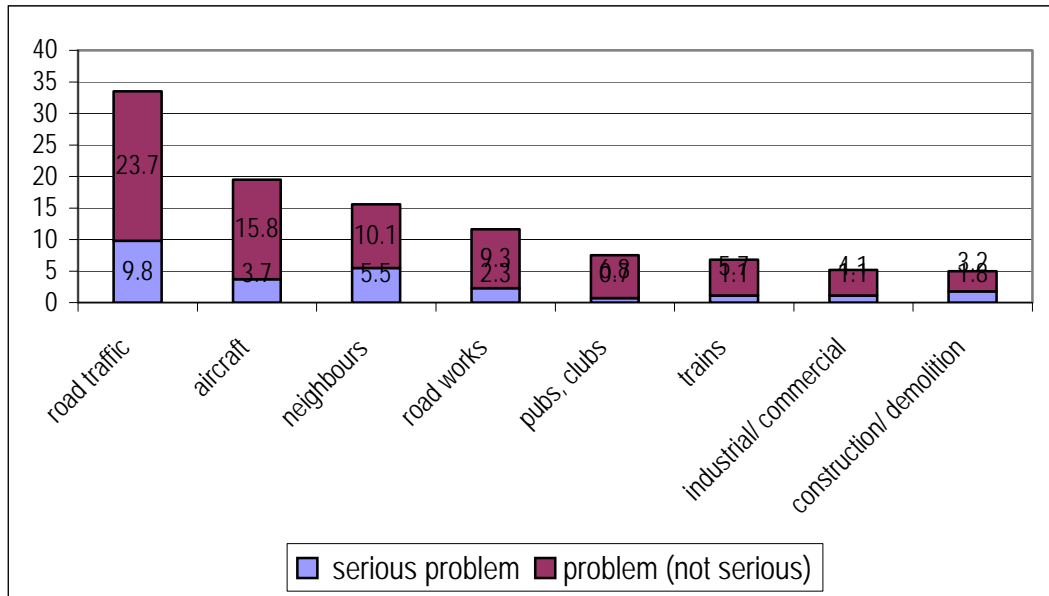
(Appendix 2, pages 26 to 34 refer)

'Road traffic' was perceived as the greatest noise pollutant, mentioned by a third (33.5%) of all respondents as a problem : by 9.8% as a 'serious problem', and by a further 23.7% as a 'problem, but not serious'.

'Aircraft' (19.5% problem – 3.7% 'serious' + 15.8% 'not serious'), 'neighbours' (15.6% problem – 5.5% 'serious' + 10.1% 'not serious'), and 'road works' (11.6% problem - 2.3% 'serious' + 9.3% 'not serious) were the only other noises rated as a problem by in excess of one in ten respondents.

Other noise pollutants listed were rated as problems by less than 10% of all respondents – ‘pubs, clubs & entertainment’ (7.5%), ‘trains’ (6.8%), ‘noise from industrial or commercial premises’ (5.2%), and ‘construction/ demolition’ (5.0%).

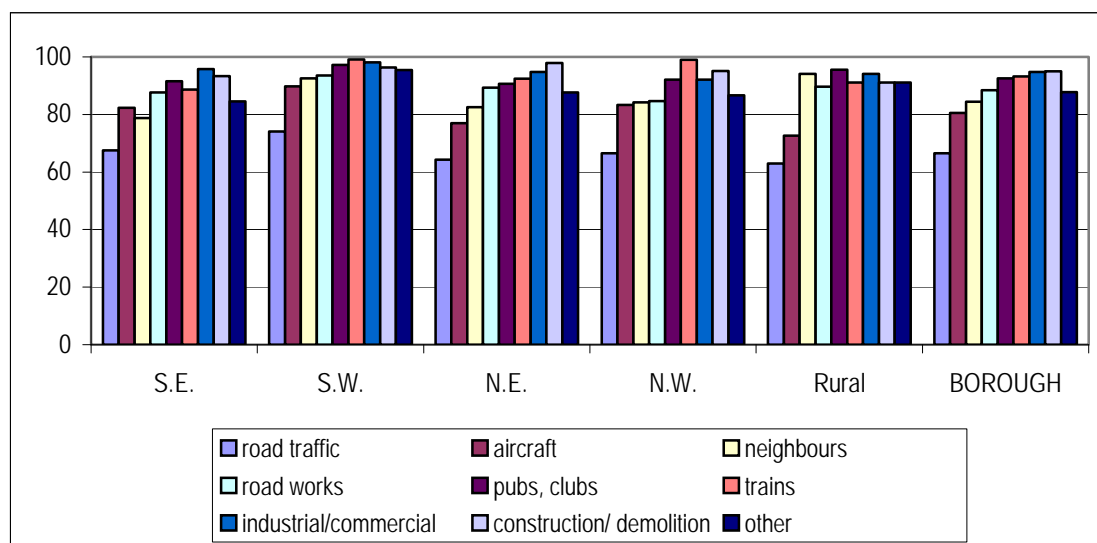
‘How would you rate the following types of noise in your neighbourhood?’
 (% response – all respondents)



As regards area differences, ‘road traffic’ was rated as the major noise problem in all areas of the Borough, with the % of respondents reporting this a problem ranging from 25.9% in the South West, to 37% in the Rural areas. However, ‘aircraft’ was more likely to be rated as a problem by those living in Rural areas (27.4% aircraft problem), and the North East (23% aircraft problem), whilst ‘neighbours’ were more likely to be seen as a problem by those living in the South East (neighbours 21.2% problem).

'How would you rate the following types of noise in your neighbourhood ?'

('Not a problem' -% response – by area)



12.1% of respondents referred to 'other' noise pollutants (other than those listed), with the majority of these referring to 'children or youths' (3.9%), 'dogs barking' (2.8%), and 'car/burglar alarms' (1.1%). Other noises referred to as problems were 'police plane/helicopter', 'fireworks', 'loud music' and 'motorbikes'.

2.6 Ease of access to services

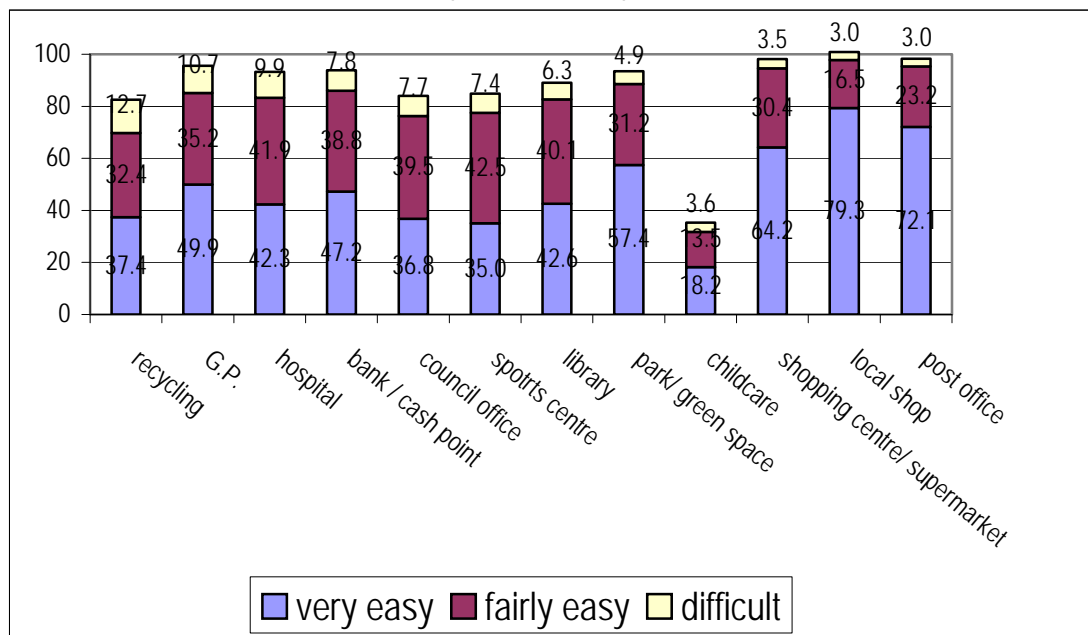
Q.10 : 'From your home, how easy is it for you to get to the following, using your usual form of transport ?'

(Appendix 2, pages 35 to 47 refer)

The great majority of respondents reported no difficulties in reaching major services. The services most difficult for respondents to get to using their usual form of transport were 'recycling facilities' (12.7% difficult), 'G.P./ Doctor's Surgery' (10.7%), and 'Local Hospital' (9.9%). Four other services were also reported as being difficult to reach by in excess of 5% of all respondents – these were 'Bank/ Cash Point' (7.8%), 'Council Office' (7.7%), 'Sports Centre' (7.4%), and 'Library' (6.3%).

The services most easily accessible are 'Local shops' (79.3% very easy to get to) and 'Post Offices' (72.1% very easy). Other services which a majority of respondents reported as being 'very easy' to get to using their usual form of transport were 'Shopping Centre or Supermarket' (64.2%) and 'Park or green space which can be used by the public', (57.4%).

'How easy to get to... using usual form of transport ?'
(% response – all respondents)



For all services a number of respondents gave a 'don't know' response when asked about 'ease of getting to', and this is indicative of respondents not using the service. Over half of all respondents gave 'don't know' responses in respect of 'Childcare facilities', and when these 'don't know' responses are excluded from the analysis, the % of respondents reporting 'difficulty' in getting to the service rises to 79% (very easy 39.6%, fairly easy 29.4%, neither easy nor difficult 23.2%). For all other services the proportion of 'don't know' responses was small, and only rose above 3% in respect of 'library; (4.3%), 'council office' (7%), 'sports centre' (7.3%) and 'recycling facility' (7.5%).

Access to services for all services was most difficult for respondents with 'long standing illnesses or disabilities', those 'without a car in the household' and '65+ year olds'. 'Recycling facilities' is the service which 'those without a car in the household' (22.9% difficult) and '65+ year olds' (17.8% difficult) find most difficult to get to. Whilst for respondents 'with a long standing illness or disability' the 'local hospital' (21.7% difficult) is the most difficult service to get to.

The most notable area differences were in relation to 'Local Hospitals' and 'G.P./Doctors Surgeries'. Respondents living in the North East (15.5% difficult) and South East (12.4% difficult) reported the greatest difficulty in getting to a 'G.P./Doctors Surgery', and those

living in the South West (5.6% difficult) the least difficulty. Those living in the North East (15.8% difficult) also reported the greatest difficulty in getting to a 'Local Hospital', whereas those living in the North West (2.5% difficult) reported least difficulty.

3. **MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES**

Q.11 : '*The Council's principal role is to make Darlington a place where people want to live, work and can enjoy a high quality of life. The Council has identified six main issues which it believes are important –*

a) Which of these issues do you feel are most important (first & second) in making Darlington a place where people want to live, work and can enjoy a high quality of life ?

b) And how successful or unsuccessful would you say the Council is in dealing with these issues.?'

(Appendix 2, pages 48 to 55 refer)

3.1 **Most important issues**

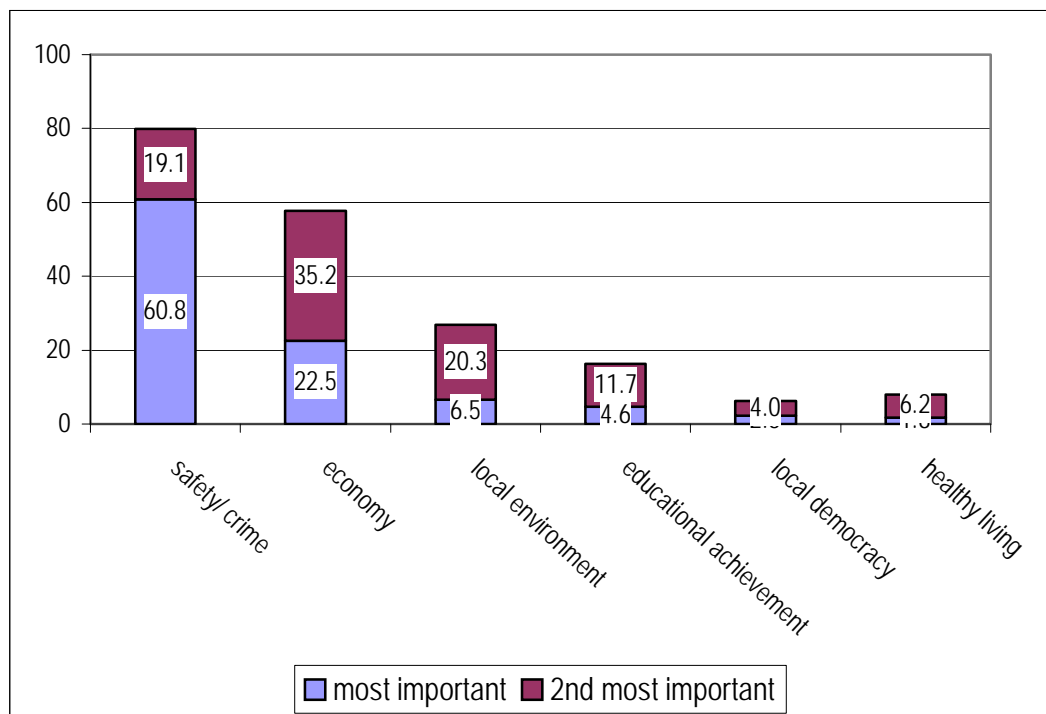
The majority of respondents believe that 'promoting community safety and reducing crime' is the most important issue facing the Council : 60.8% of respondents believe this is the 'most important' issue, and a further 19.1% that it is the '2nd most important' issue.

'Improving the local economy and creating jobs' was voted the second most important issue by the overall sample, but was some way behind, being referred to by only 22.5% as the 'most important' and 35.2% as the '2nd most important'.

'Supporting healthy living' (1.8% most + 6.2% 2nd most), and 'involving residents in local democracy (2.3% most + 4% 2nd most), were rated by the total sample as the least important issues listed, both being referred to by less than 10% of the sample as one of the two most important issues.

'Promoting community safety/ reducing crime' was seen as the most important issue by all (27) sample sub-groups, with the proportion of respondents who saw this as the 'most important' only falling below 50% in respect of the 'South West' area. Amongst respondents from the South West, whilst 'community safety/crime' (38%) achieved the highest vote in terms of being 'most important', 'improving the local economy and creating jobs (33.3%) was close behind. Respondents from the South West were also more likely than others to believe that the 'environment' and 'educational achievement' were the most important issues.

Most important issues ?
 (% response – all respondents)

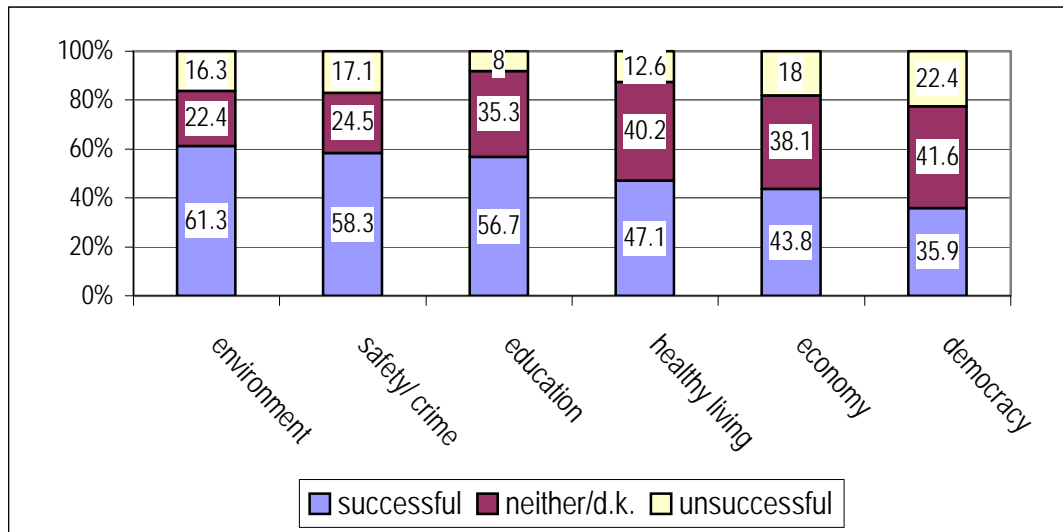


3.2 Councils success in dealing with most important issues

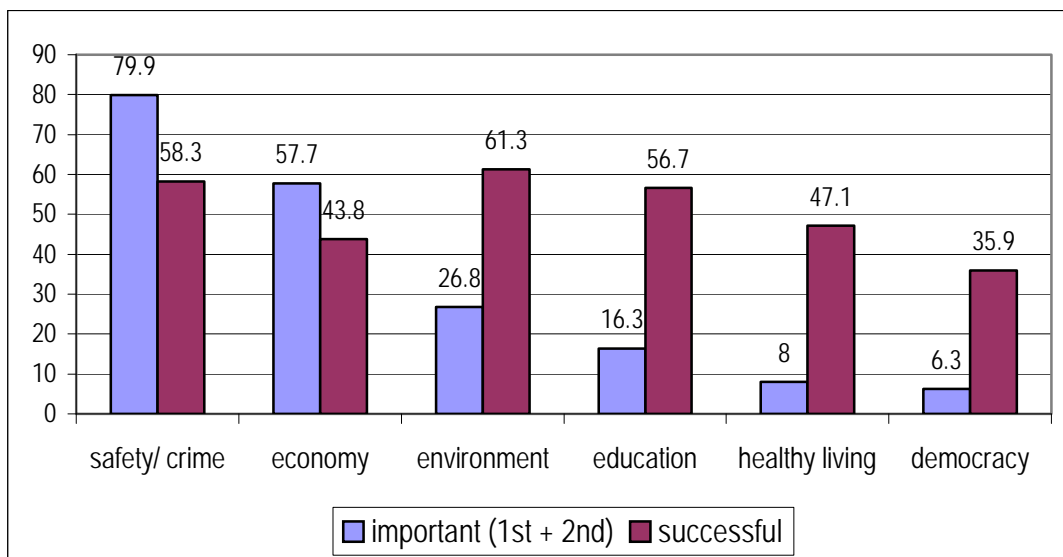
The majority of respondents believe the Council is successful in 'maintaining and enhancing the environment' (8.8% very + 52.5% fairly), 'promoting community safety and reducing crime' (4.7% very + 53.6% fairly), and in 'supporting educational achievement' (8.6% very + 48.1% fairly). Less than a half of respondents saw the Council as successful in 'supporting healthy living' (4.4% very + 42.7% fairly), and 'improving the local economy and creating jobs' (3.5% very + 40.3% fairly), 'involving residents in local democracy' (3.1% very + 32.8% fairly).

The most notable area differences in relation to differences in perception of Council success was in relation to 'promoting community safety/reducing crime' where 24.8% of those living in the South East rated the Council as 'unsuccessful', compared to only 3.7% in the South West. Respondents from the South West, however, were more likely than others to rate the Council as 'neither successful nor unsuccessful' in dealing with this (and other) issues.

'How successful is Council in dealing with these issues?'
 (% response – all respondents)

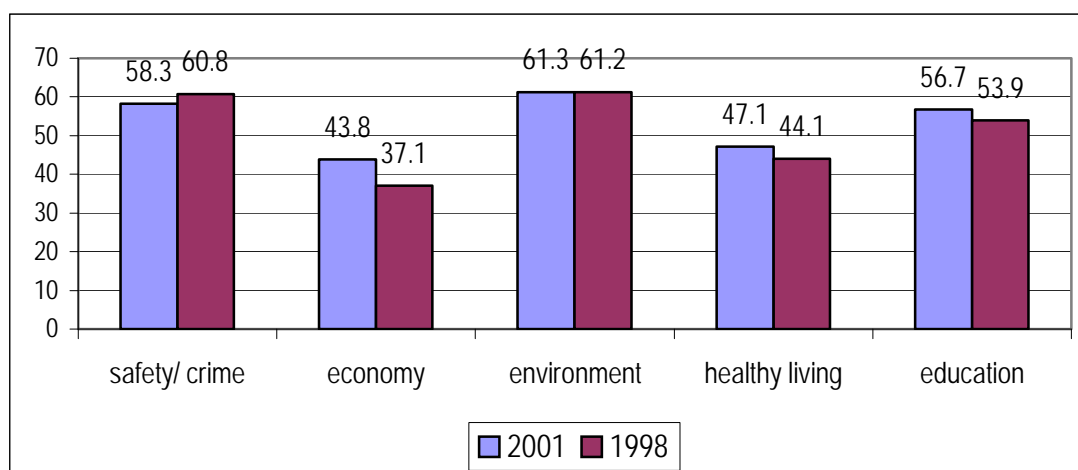


Most Important Issues & Perceived Council Success in dealing with them
 (% response – all respondents)



Comparisons with responses from the 1998 Community Survey suggest that perception of Council success has changed very little over the last three years, with the only statistically significant difference being in respect of 'improving the local economy and creating jobs', which showed a small increase from 37.1% in 1998 to 43.8% in 2001.

Perceived Successful – 2001 cf. 1998
(all respondents - % 'successful' response)



4. COUNCIL SERVICES

4.1 Satisfaction with Services (all respondents)

Q.12 : '....I would like you to tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the way in which each of these services is provided in your local area ?'

Q.13 : 'Are there any other services, not mentioned here, that you are particularly satisfied or dissatisfied with ?'

(Appendix 2, pages 56 to 87 refer)

Services about which more than three-quarters of all respondents expressed satisfaction were 'upkeep & appearance of the town centre' (86.8% satisfied), 'street lighting' (86.4%), 'refuse collection' (85.7%), 'security, incl. c.c.t.v. in the town centre' (85.4%), 'Civic Theatre' (84.1%), 'signposting' (81%), libraries & museums (78.2%), the Dolphin Centre (77.7%), and 'festivals and events' (76.6%).

Services about which a quarter or more of all respondents expressed dissatisfaction were 'road maintenance and repairs' (43.2% dissatisfied), 'pavement maintenance' (40%), children's play areas (33.2%), 'car parking in the town centre' (31.4%), 'youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (28.1%), and 'car parking in residential areas' (25%).

A summary of the satisfaction/dissatisfaction percentage responses from all respondents is shown in the following table for all services. The 'net' satisfaction score (satisfaction percentage minus dissatisfaction percentage) is also shown for each service.

Satisfaction with Council Services
(% response – all respondents)

	satisfied	neither/d.k.	dissatisfied	(net)
Upkeep & appearance - town centre	86.8	7.2	6.1	80.7
Street lighting	86.4	7.5	6.1	80.3
Refuse collection	85.7	7.7	6.7	79.0
Security incl CCTV in town centre	85.4	11.4	3.0	82.4
Civic Theatre	84.1	15.1	0.8	83.3
Signposting for attractions/facilities	81.0	14.8	4.2	76.8
Libraries & museum	78.2	18.3	3.4	74.8
The Dolphin Centre	77.7	17.9	4.3	73.4
Festivals & events	76.6	20.5	2.8	73.8
Arts centre	69.8	29.0	1.2	68.6
Recycling facilities	65.2	23.1	11.7	53.5
Parks & open spaces	62.5	13.2	24.2	38.3
Upkeep & appearance - residential areas	61.9	17.2	21.0	40.9
Other sports facilities	55.6	30.3	14.1	41.5
Adult education	53.3	42.5	4.2	49.1
Council Tax administration & collection	53.1	37.2	9.8	43.3
Car parking in residential areas	51.5	23.4	25.0	26.5
Nursery & primary schools	48.1	49.6	2.3	45.8
Security incl CCTV in other areas	46.0	36.6	17.4	28.6
Car parking in town centre	45.4	23.2	31.4	14.0
Secondary schools	44.5	50.4	5.0	39.5
Pavement maintenance	41.5	18.6	40.0	1.5
Road maintenance & repairs	39.3	17.5	43.2	-3.9
Planning & control of development	34.4	55.7	9.9	24.5
Social care for older & vulnerable people	31.4	45.4	23.2	8.2
Children's play areas	29.5	37.3	33.2	-3.7
School meals	28.0	66.1	5.9	22.1
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	26.2	63.0	10.9	15.3
Council housing	23.9	67.8	8.2	15.7
Youth clubs & other facilities for young people	21.2	50.7	28.1	-6.9

The highest overall satisfaction levels (as calculated by the 'mean' score which takes into account both the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, where 1 = very satisfied, and 5 = very dissatisfied, and the varying level of don't know responses) were achieved by 'civic theatre' (mean 1.69), 'security in the town centre' (1.76), 'upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (1.83), 'refuse collection' (1.85), 'arts centre' (1.89), 'libraries & museums' (1.89), 'festivals and events' (1.89), 'street lighting' (1.92), 'the Dolphin Centre' (1.93), and 'nursery & primary schools' (1.96).

Lowest satisfaction levels (as calculated by mean scores) were reported in respect of 'youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (3.22), 'road maintenance', (3.18), 'children's play grounds' (3.14) and ('pavement maintenance' (3.09).

Mean Satisfaction Scores by Area

(1 = very satisfied : 3 = neither satisfied/dissatisfied : 5 = very dissatisfied)

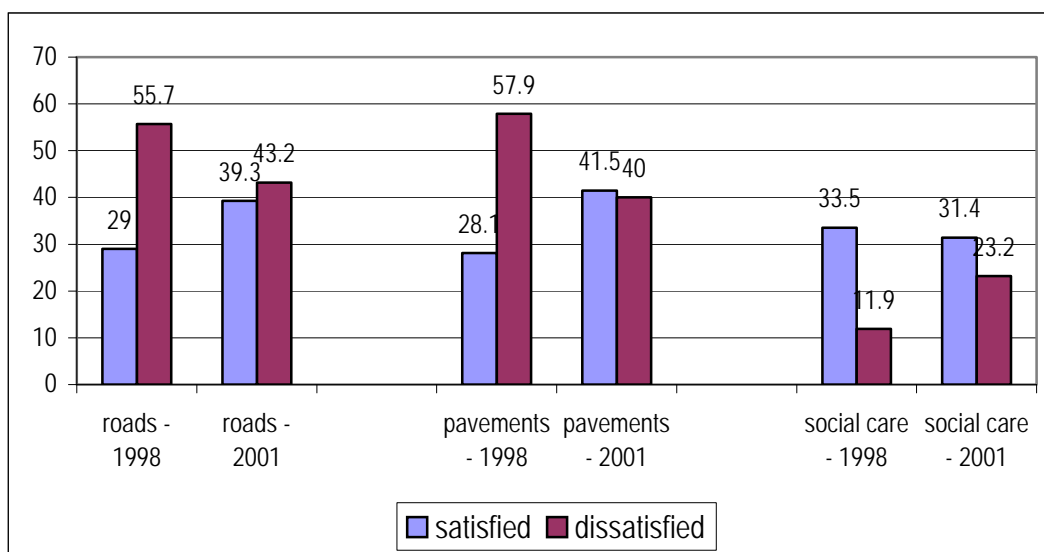
	S.E.	S.W.	N.E.	N.W.	Rural	TOTAL
Civic Theatre	1.79	1.60	1.69	1.69	1.58	1.69
Security incl CCTV in town centre	1.75	1.94	1.68	1.81	1.73	1.76
Upkeep & appearance - town centre	1.82	2.30	1.67	1.89	1.77	1.83
Refuse collection	1.81	2.30	1.81	1.83	1.71	1.85
Arts centre	2.02	1.74	1.91	1.81	1.83	1.89
Libraries & museum	1.98	1.79	1.88	1.78	1.95	1.89
Festivals & events	1.93	1.83	1.81	1.86	2.08	1.89
Street lighting	2.00	1.97	1.85	1.98	1.77	1.92
The Dolphin Centre	1.98	1.98	1.82	2.01	1.93	1.93
Nursery & primary schools	2.16	1.78	1.85	1.97	1.85	1.96
Signposting for attractions/facilities	2.11	1.97	1.98	2.00	1.91	2.01
Adult education	2.29	2.05	2.04	2.11	2.08	2.13
Secondary schools	2.35	1.92	2.20	2.12	1.73	2.14
Recycling facilities	2.32	2.42	2.29	2.19	2.18	2.28
Council Tax administration & collection	2.46	2.61	2.30	2.39	2.38	2.40
School meals	2.34	2.46	2.48	2.44	2.33	2.42
Other sports facilities	2.58	2.17	2.52	2.39	2.25	2.44
Upkeep & appearance - residential areas	2.60	2.50	2.60	2.61	2.22	2.54
Parks & open spaces	2.68	2.15	2.70	2.52	2.34	2.55
Security incl CCTV in other areas	2.46	2.66	2.74	2.56	2.71	2.61
Council housing	2.59	2.82	2.80	2.67	2.60	2.69
Planning & control of development	2.65	2.83	2.64	2.73	2.76	2.69
Car parking in residential areas	2.65	2.70	2.74	2.80	2.71	2.72
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	2.66	2.93	2.62	2.88	2.80	2.73
Car parking in town centre	2.86	3.16	2.89	2.84	2.85	2.89
Social care for older & vulnerable people	2.80	3.17	3.09	2.94	2.77	2.94
Pavement maintenance	3.05	2.76	3.20	3.13	3.07	3.09
Children's play areas	3.28	2.77	3.13	2.99	3.39	3.14
Road maintenance & repairs	3.09	2.95	3.30	3.19	3.28	3.18
Youth clubs & other facilities for young people	3.09	2.59	3.46	3.14	3.64	3.22

4.2 Satisfaction with Services (comparison with 1998)

The majority of services showed some increase in net satisfaction since 1998, with these increases being substantial in respect of 'pavement maintenance' and 'road maintenance' (where 'net' satisfaction increased by 31.3% and 22.8% respectively). Other services which achieved an increase in 'net' satisfaction in excess of 10% were 'arts centre' (+ 11.0%), 'council tax administration and collection' (+ 11.0%) and 'car parking in the town centre' (+ 11.0%).

Only five services showed a decrease in net satisfaction since 1998, and only two of these represented statistically significant changes. 'Social care for older and vulnerable people' showed a marked decrease in overall satisfaction level, with net satisfaction decreasing by 13.4%, whilst net satisfaction with the 'upkeep & appearance in the town centre', although receiving the third highest overall satisfaction score, showed a small but significant decrease (- 7.9%) in net satisfaction.

Satisfaction with Council Services – Major changes since 1998



Changes in 'net' satisfaction since 1998 : All Respondents
('net' satisfaction = % satisfied response minus % dissatisfied response)

	2001 net satisfaction	1998 net satisfaction	Change since 1998
Pavement maintenance	1.5	-29.8	31.3
Road maintenance & repairs	-3.9	-26.7	22.8
Arts centre	68.6	56.8	11.8
Council Tax administration & collection	43.3	32.1	11.2
Car parking in town centre	14.0	2.9	11.1
Car parking in residential areas	26.5	17.0	9.5
Children's play areas	-3.7	-12.7	9.0
Festivals & events	73.8	65.0	8.8
Libraries & museum	74.8	67.0	7.8
Civic Theatre	83.3	75.8	7.5
School meals	22.1	14.6	7.5
Refuse collection	79.0	71.7	7.3
Security incl CCTV in other areas	28.6	21.6	7.0
Secondary schools	39.5	32.5	7.0
Recycling facilities	53.5	47.6	5.9
Signposting for attractions/facilities	76.8	71.7	5.1
The Dolphin Centre	73.4	68.8	4.6
Adult education	49.1	45.8	3.3
Youth clubs & other facilities for young people	-6.9	-10.1	3.2
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	15.3	12.5	2.8
Council housing	15.7	12.8	2.9
Other sports facilities	41.5	39.4	2.1
Nursery & primary schools	45.8	43.7	2.1
Upkeep & appearance - residential areas	40.9	39.0	1.9
Planning & control of development	24.5	23.9	0.6
Street lighting	80.3	83.0	-2.7
Parks & open spaces	38.3	41.4	-3.1
Security incl CCTV in town centre	82.4	86.1	-3.7
Upkeep & appearance - town centre	80.7	88.6	-7.9
Social care for older & vulnerable people	8.2	21.6	-13.4

4.3 Usage of Services

Q.16 : *'Which, if any, of the services on this card do you or members of your family use or feel you benefit from ?'*

(Appendix 2, pages 108 to 111 refer)

Respondents were asked about usage of services which is 'discretionary' (i.e. accessed by choice or need).

Services with the highest usage, and which more than one fifth (20%) of respondents reported that they or members of their household used were the 'Dolphin Centre' (51.3%), 'Car parking in the Town Centre' (42.2%), 'Civic Theatre' (41.4%) 'Libraries and Museums' (38%), 'festivals and events' (24.8%), 'nursery and primary schools' (23.9%), 'car parking in other areas' (23%), 'Arts Centre' (22.4%), and 'Other sports facilities' (21.7%).

The least used services (used by less than 10%) were 'Housing & Council Tax benefits' (9.7%), 'Youth Clubs and other facilities for young people' (5.8%), 'social care for older and vulnerable people' (5.2%), and 'planning and control of development' (2.8%).

5.3% of respondents reported not using any services, and this rose to over 10% amongst '65+ year olds', 'those in private rented accommodation', and 'those without a car in the household'.

The most notable sub-group differences in usage related to usage of the 'Civic Theatre', 'Arts Centre' and 'Libraries and Museums', with usage of these facilities being highest amongst those who lived in 'owner occupied' properties, those with 'one or more cars in the household' and 'professional/managerial' occupational grouping. There was also some area differences, with usage of all three services being lowest amongst respondents from the South East.

Reported usage for all services is shown in the following table.

'Which...do you or members of your family use, or feel you benefit from ?
(% response – all respondents)

	Used/benefited %
Dolphin Centre	51.3
car parking in town centre	42.2
Civic Theatre	41.4
libraries & museum	38.0
festivals events	24.8
nursery & primary schools	23.9
car parking in other areas	23.0
arts centre	22.4
other sports facilities	21.7
secondary schools	19.3
children's play areas	17.8
adult education	16.5
school meals	14.9
council housing	12.5
housing council tax benefits	9.7
youth clubs & other facs young people	5.8
none	5.3
social care for older & vulnerable people	5.2
planning & control of development	2.8

4.4 Satisfaction with Services amongst Service Users

For most services, overall satisfaction levels (as calculated by 'mean' satisfaction scores) amongst users was somewhat higher than amongst all respondents, the only exception here being in respect of 'social care for older and vulnerable people', 'planning and control of development' and 'car parking in residential areas' which showed small negative differences.

Satisfaction amongst users of services was highest in respect of the 'civic theatre' (1.47 mean), 'festivals & events' (1.54) and 'Arts Centre', and was lowest amongst users of 'social care for older & vulnerable people' and users of 'children's play areas'.

'Mean' Satisfaction with Services – Users & All Respondents
(1 – very satisfied : 3 = neither satisfied/dissatisfied : 5 = very dissatisfied)

	All Respondents	Users only
Civic Theatre	1.69	1.47
Festivals & events	1.89	1.54
Arts centre	1.89	1.55
Libraries & museum	1.89	1.73
Nursery & primary schools	1.96	1.78
The Dolphin Centre	1.93	1.8
Adult education	2.13	1.95
Secondary schools	2.14	1.96
School meals	2.42	2.03
Other sports facilities, incl. golf course, facilities in parks	2.44	2.3
Council housing	2.69	2.34
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	2.73	2.41
Planning & control of development	2.69	2.81
Car parking in town centre	2.89	2.86
Car parking in residential areas	2.72	2.86
Youth clubs & other facilities for young people	3.22	2.94
Social care for older & vulnerable people	2.94	3.06
Children's play areas	3.14	3.13

4.5 Service Priorities

Q.14 : *'And which two services do you think should be given the greatest priority for improvement ?'* (Appendix 2, pages 88 to 101 refer)

4.5.1 First Priority for Improvement

'Social care for older and vulnerable people' was believed to be the service most in need of improvement – mentioned by 10.8% of all respondents as the first priority for improvement. 'Youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (8.2%) was the second most mentioned service in this respect (1st priority), followed by 'road maintenance and repairs' (7.6%), 'parks and open spaces' (7.3%), 'nursery and primary schools' (7%). 'Social care for older and vulnerable people' was the top priority in four of the five areas of the Borough, being pushed into second place by 'road maintenance and repairs' in the South West. 'Youth clubs and other facilities for young people' was joint to priority in the North East.

First Priority for Improvement – By Area

	South East	South West	North East	North West	Rural	Col %
	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	
social care for older & vulnerable people	11.0	10.2	11.3	10.8	9.6	10.8
youth clubs & other facs young people	7.4	5.6	11.3	6.4	8.1	8.2
road maintenance & repairs	5.3	13.0	10.0	8.4	2.2	7.6
parks & open spaces	10.6	0.9	8.2	5.9	5.2	7.3
nursery & primary schools	6.7	10.2	6.2	5.4	8.9	7.0
Secondary schools	6.0	2.8	6.2	8.4	8.9	6.6
security measures incl CCTV in other areas	5.3	3.7	8.2	5.4	5.2	6.0
children's play areas	8.8	3.7	2.7	7.4	4.4	5.7
car parking in town centre	5.3	8.3	5.8	3.0	5.9	5.4
pavement maintenance	2.8	4.6	5.8	5.4	4.4	4.6
upkeep of appearance other areas	3.2	3.7	2.7	5.4	0.7	3.2
council housing	3.5	0.9	2.7	3.0	5.2	3.1
some other service	3.9	4.6	1.4	2.5	3.0	2.8
car parking in other areas	1.4	1.9	1.7	3.4	2.2	2.1
housing council tax benefits	2.5		1.0	1.5	4.4	1.9
upkeep & appearance of town centre	0.7	4.6	0.7	3.0	2.2	1.8
refuse collection	1.1	4.6	1.0	2.0	0.7	1.6
other sports facilities	1.8	1.9	1.7	0.5	0.7	1.4
security measures, incl CCTV in town centre	1.1	0.9		2.5	3.0	1.3
recycling facilities	0.4		1.7	0.5	2.2	1.0
street lighting	1.4		0.7	1.5	0.7	1.0
Dolphin Centre			1.4	1.0	1.5	0.8
planning & control of development	2.1				1.5	0.8
school meals	1.1	0.9	1.0			0.7
libraries & museum	0.7	0.9	0.3	1.0	0.7	0.7
council tax admin collection			1.0	1.0		0.5
adult education				1.5		0.3
Civic Theatre			0.7		0.7	0.3
festivals events			0.3	0.5	0.7	0.3

4.5.2 First + Second Priorities

When first and second priorities for improvements are added together 'social care for older and vulnerable people' is still the top priority, mentioned by 19.4% of all respondents. Two other services were mentioned as priorities (1st or 2nd) by in excess of 15% of all respondents; these were 'youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (16.8%) and 'road maintenance and repairs' (15.4%).

Other services mentioned by more than 10% of respondents – 'parks & open spaces' (12.5%), 'security measures incl. c.c.t.v. in other areas' (12.1%), 'secondary school's'

(11.9%), 'nursery and primary schools' (10.7%), 'car parking in the town centre' (10.5%), and 'children's play areas' (10.3%).

First + Second Priorities by Area

	South East	South West	North East	North West	Rural	Total
social care for older & vulnerable people	17.0	16.7	21.0	23.2	17.8	19.4
youth clubs & other facs young people	16.3	8.3	20.6	14.3	20.0	16.8
road maintenance & repairs	12.0	20.4	18.2	14.8	13.3	15.4
parks & open spaces	15.2	3.7	15.5	11.8	8.1	12.5
security measures incl CCTV in other areas	12.0	6.5	13.4	12.8	12.6	12.1
secondary schools	10.2	10.2	12.7	12.3	14.1	11.9
nursery & primary schools	11.0	13.9	9.6	8.4	13.3	10.7
car parking in town centre	11.3	13.9	10.0	8.4	10.4	10.5
children's play areas	14.5	6.5	8.2	10.3	8.9	10.3
pavement maintenance	8.8	9.3	11.3	11.3	7.4	9.9
upkeep of appearance other areas	7.1	5.6	7.6	9.4	5.2	7.3
council housing	4.2	0.9	6.2	7.4	5.9	5.3
car parking in other areas	3.9	3.7	3.4	6.9	3.0	4.2
upkeep & appearance of town centre	1.1	9.3	3.1	5.4	5.9	4.0
some other service	5.3	4.6	2.1	3.0	5.2	3.8
security measures, incl CCTV in town centre	2.1	1.9	1.7	5.4	5.2	3.0
housing council tax benefits	5.3		1.0	2.5	4.4	2.8
other sports facilities	3.5	5.6	2.1	2.0	1.5	2.7
refuse collection	1.1	10.2	2.4	2.5	1.5	2.7
recycling facilities	1.4	2.8	3.1	2.5	3.7	2.5
street lighting	3.5		2.7	3.0	1.5	2.5
adult education	1.4	0.9	2.4	1.5	1.5	1.7
Dolphin Centre	0.7		2.1	2.0	3.7	1.7
planning & control of development	3.5	1.9	0.3		3.0	1.7
libraries & museum	0.7	2.8	0.3	2.0	1.5	1.2
school meals	1.4	1.9	1.4		0.7	1.1
council tax admin collection	0.4		1.0	2.5	1.5	1.1
festivals events			0.3	1.0	1.5	0.5
Civic Theatre			0.7		1.5	0.4
signposting for attractions/facilities			0.7	0.5		0.3
Arts Centre						0.0

'Social care for older and vulnerable people' was a top priority in all areas of the borough, though there were some differences between areas, as shown by the listing of the top three priorities (1st + 2nd) for each area :

<u>South East</u>	Social care for older & vulnerable people (17%) Youth clubs and other facilities for young people (16.3%) Parks and open spaces (15.2%)
<u>South West</u>	Road maintenance and repairs (20.4%) Social care for older & vulnerable people (16.7%) Nursery & Primary schools/Car parking in Town Centre (both 13.9%)
<u>North East</u>	Social care for older & vulnerable people (21.0%) Youth clubs & other facilities for young people (20.6%) Road maintenance & repairs (18.2%)
<u>North West</u>	Social care for older & vulnerable people (23.2%) Youth clubs & other facilities for young people (14.3%) Road maintenance & repairs (14.8%)
<u>Rural</u>	Youth clubs & other facilities for young people (20%) Social care for older & vulnerable people (17.8%) Secondary schools (14.1%).

There were also some other area differences, most notable being that respondents from the South West gave a greater priority to 'refuse collection' than other areas, and a lower priority to 'parks and open spaces' and 'youth clubs and facilities for young people'.

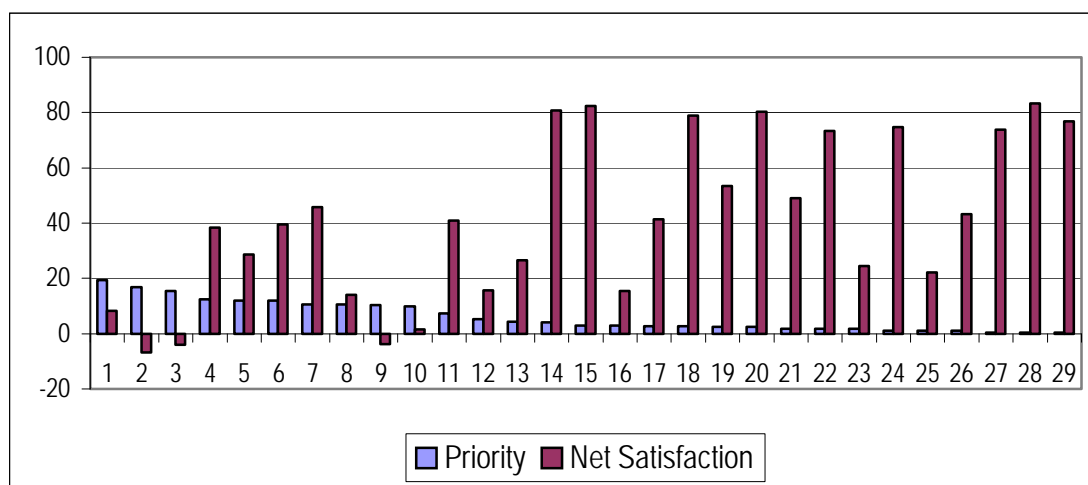
There were also other sample sub-group differences: 'Social care for older & vulnerable people' was of much higher priority amongst older respondents (ranging from only 10.4% amongst 16-24 years to 27.4% amongst 65+ year olds), whilst schools, both 'nursery and primary' (16.6%) and 'secondary' (17.4%) were of a high priority amongst '25-44 year olds', and those with children in their households.

'Council tenants' gave a much higher priority to 'council housing' (15%) than did 'owner occupiers', and also gave a higher priority rating for 'children's play areas (17.3%).

Respondents with a 'long term illness or disability' gave a higher priority to 'pavement maintenance' (16.3%) than did others.

Priority for improvement for all services is shown graphically below, set against 'net satisfaction'

Service Priorities (1st + 2nd) and 'Net Satisfaction
(% response – all respondents)



Code

	priority %	Net sat %		Priority %	Net sat %
1 social care for older/ vulnerable people	19.4	8.2	16 housing council tax benefits	2.8	15.3
2 youth clubs & other facs young people	16.8	-6.9	17 other sports facilities	2.7	41.5
3 road maintenance & repairs	15.4	-3.9	18 refuse collection	2.7	79.0
4 parks & open spaces	12.5	38.3	19 recycling facilities	2.5	53.5
5 security measures in other areas	12.1	28.6	20 street lighting	2.5	80.3
6 secondary schools	11.9	39.5	21 adult education	1.7	49.1
7 nursery & primary schools	10.7	45.8	22 Dolphin Centre	1.7	73.4
8 car parking in town centre	10.5	14.0	23 planning & control of develop't	1.7	24.5
9 children's play areas	10.3	-3.7	24 libraries & museum	1.2	74.8
10 pavement maintenance	9.9	1.5	25 school meals	1.1	22.1
11 upkeep of appearance other areas	7.3	40.9	26 council tax admin collection	1.1	43.3
12 council housing	5.3	15.7	27 festivals events	0.5	73.8
13 car parking in other areas	4.2	26.5	28 Civic Theatre	0.4	83.3
14 upkeep & appearance of town centre	4.0	80.7	29 signposting for attractions/facilities	0.3	76.8
15 security measures, I in town centre	3.0	82.4	30 arts centre	0	68.6

4.6 Council spend on Services

Q.15 : *'Are there any services listed, which you feel that the Council spends too much money on, and could be reduced ?'*

(Appendix 2, pages 102 to 107 refer)

Over 60% of respondents did not mention a service on which they felt that Council spending could be reduced : 'don't know' (29.8%); 'none' (35.3%). The service mentioned most frequently as the one on which spending could be reduced was 'the upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (8.5% of all respondents). Other services referred to by more than 2% of all respondents in this respect were 'festivals and events' (3.4%), 'Council Tax administration and collection' (2.9%), 'road maintenance and repairs' (2.9%), 'Council housing' and 'housing and Council Tax benefits', (both 2.6%).

6.8% of respondents referred to services 'other' than those listed, and the majority of these related to 'flowers' (no specific area mentioned, though many who gave this response also mentioned 'upkeep and appearance of town centre', 'council administration etc.' or 'brick train'.

4.7 Service Improvements

Q.17 : *'You mentioned as being your first priority for improvement. How would you like this service to be improved ?'*

The main suggested improvements or comments relating to the three services mentioned as a first priority by the greatest number of respondents were :

'Social care for older and vulnerable people'

- Comments on the close 'programme' for care homes with respondents generally being very concerned about this
- Funding of care in own homes to be a priority

'Youth clubs and other facilities for young people

- Requirements for the provision of more facilities, opportunities and clubs specifically to keep young people off the streets and to act as a 'diversion' from crime and/or drug and alcohol abuse
- Young people appear to be viewed as 11+ years

Road maintenance and repairs

- Comments on potholes, the need to improve surfaces and to avoid 'patching'
- Regular checks and speedier maintenance required

Full listings of respondents' suggested improvements for all services are shown in Appendix 3.

5. ACCESS TO SERVICES

5.1 Frequency of contact

Q.18 : *'About how often have you had to contact Darlington Borough Council with an enquiry during the last year or so ?'*

Just over half (52.5%) of all respondents had contacted the Council with an enquiry during the last year : 41% '1 – 4 times', 9.2% '5 – 10 times', and 2.3% 'more than 10 times'. Respondents living in homes 'rented from the Council' (74.5% contact) were most likely to have contacted the Council during the last year, and those living in the South West of the Borough (39.9% contact) least likely.

5.2 Methods of contact used and ease of finding contact details

Q.19 : *'Which methods of contact did you use?'*

Q.20 : *'And was it easy or not easy for you to find the contact details for contacting the Council (telephone numbers, addresses etc.).'*

(Appendix 2, pages 112 to 117 refer)

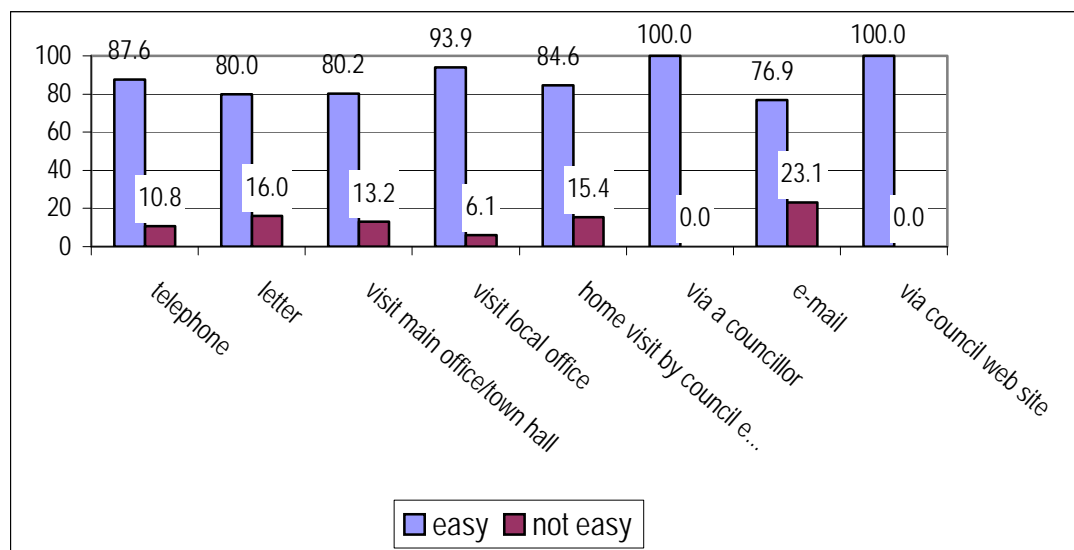
'Telephone' was the principal method used for contacting the Council (used by 81.7% of all those who had had contact in the previous year), and this was followed by 'visit to the main council office' (22.6%, 'letter', (14%), and 'visit to local office' (9.2%). Fewer respondents reported contacting the Council 'via a Councillor' (2.8%), 'by a home visit from a council employee' (2.4%) or 'by e-mail' (2.4%), and only 0.4% had made contact 'via the Council's web-site'.

'Telephone' was the main method used by the large majorities in all sample sub-groups, though 'Council tenants' were more likely to make contact by 'visiting a local office' than were others.

The great majority (86.4%) of respondents who had contacted the Council in the past year reported that it had 'been easy to find contact details', only 10.1% said this 'had not been easy' (3.6% 'can't remember'). Respondents who had a long term illness or disability were most likely to say that this had 'not been easy' (15.5%).

Accessing contact details was reported to be 'easy' by the great majority of respondents, irrespective of contact method used. Those who had made contact 'via e-mail' were more likely to have given a 'not easy' response, but as there were only 13 respondents who used this method, this is not statistically significant.

'Ease of access to data' by 'Method of Contact'



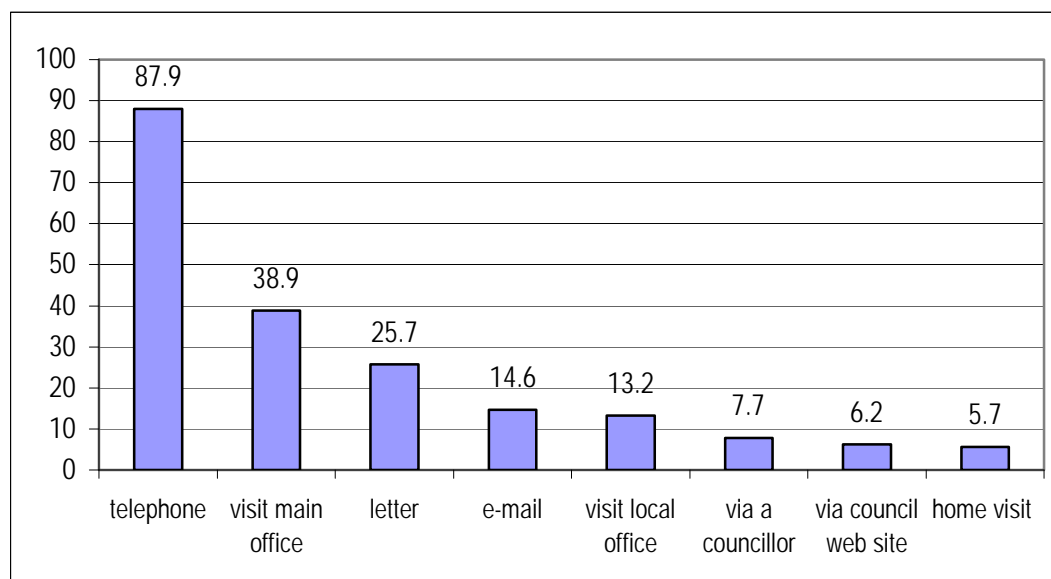
5.3 Future Methods of contact

Q.21 : 'If you needed to contact the council in the future, which of these methods would you be prepared to use ?'

The great majority (87.9%) of respondents were prepared to 'telephone' the Council if they needed to contact in the future. However, fewer respondents were prepared to use other methods of contact, with the only other methods mentioned here by more than a quarter of all respondents 'visit main offices' (38.9%), and 'letter' (25.7%). Only 14.6% were prepared to use 'e-mail' (though this rose to 21.6% amongst 25-44 year olds), 13.2% to 'visit a local office', whilst less than 10% were prepared to make contact 'via a Councillor' (7.7%), or 'via the Council web-site' (6.2%), or 'by having a home visit' (5.7%).

Respondents living in the South West were less willing to visit Council Offices than others (main – 25.9% : local – 4.6%).

'Which methods would you be prepared to use ?
 (% response – all respondents)



5.4 Adequacy of 'opening times' of Council Buildings

Q.22 : 'Do you think the present opening times of public council Buildings are adequate or inadequate ? (8.45 am to 4.45 pm Monday to Thursday, 8.45 to 4.30 on Friday)

Q.23 : (If believed to be inadequate) 'Which of the following additional opening times would you find – a) useful, and b) most useful ?'

(Appendix 2, pages 118 to 122 refer)

Almost three-quarters (74.9%) of all respondents believed that the present opening times of council buildings were 'adequate', whilst 21.6% believed they were 'inadequate', and 3.5% did not have an opinion.

Respondents who were in 'full time employment' (34.3% inadequate) were most likely to find the current opening hours inadequate, whilst those who are 'retired' (4.4% inadequate) were least likely to believe them to be inadequate.

Additional opening hours deemed to be most useful by the overall sample were 'later opening times' (47.3% most useful) and 'Saturday opening' (43.6% most useful), though there were some area differences here, with respondents from the South East and South West showing a greater preference for 'later opening hours, and those from Rural areas showing a preference for 'Saturday opening'. Only small minorities of respondents

were of the opinion that 'earlier opening times' (3.6%) or 'Sunday opening' (5.5%) would be most useful.

5.5 Access to Personal Computer and Internet in home

Q.24 : '*Do you have access to a) a personal computer in your home, and b) the internet at home ?*'

Q.25 (If no access) '*How likely do you think it is that you will have access to the internet at home in the next two years or so ?*'

(Appendix 2, pages 123 to 125 refer)

Over half (54.6%) of the total sample reported having access to a 'personal computer' at home, and 45.3% have access to the 'internet'.

There were quite major sub-group differences here, with access to the internet being highest amongst '25-44 year olds' (59%), 'owner occupiers' (52.2%), 'professional and managerial workers' (71.7%), 'other white collar workers' (61.3%), 'those with more than one car in the household' (70.5%), and 'those with children 5-17 years' (63.9%).

Access to the internet was lowest amongst '65+ year olds' (14.2%), 'Council house tenants' (18.8%), and 'those with no car in the household' (15.2%).

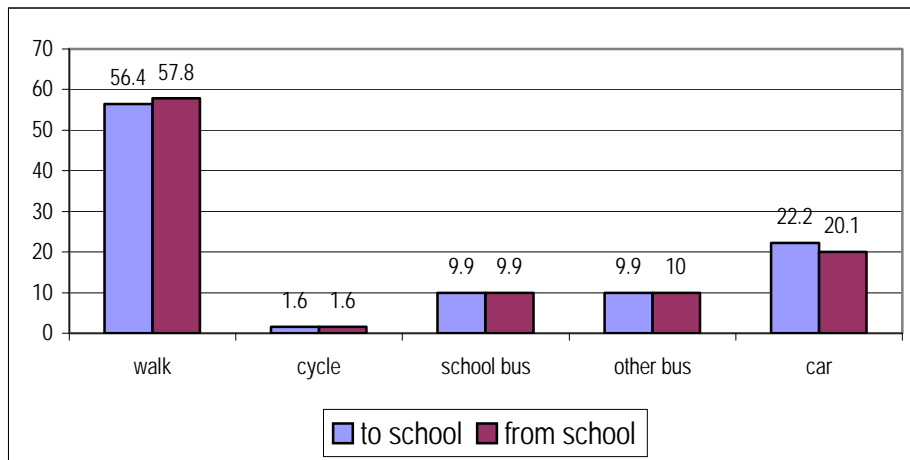
As regards area differences, access to the internet was highest in the South West (67.6%), and lowest in the South East (32.2%).

6. TRAVEL TO SCHOOL

(If Children 5 – 17 years in household) '*How do your children normally travel to and from school ? Will you tell me the main method for each child please ?*'

324 respondents had one or more children of school age, and between them they had a total of 534 children who attended school. 'Walking' was principal mode of transport, both to and from school, for all of these children, though slightly fewer walked to school (56.4%), than home from school (57.8%). This trend was reversed for the second main transport mode – 'car', by which 22.2% of children usually travelled to school, whilst only 20.1% were taken home from school by car. 'School buses' and 'other buses' were each used by around 10% of all children, for both travelling to and from school. Only 1.6% of children used a bike for travelling to or from school.

Main methods of transport to/from school
(all children)



7. WILLINGNESS TO BECOME MEMBER OF CITIZENS PANEL
(Appendix 2, page 142 refers)

40.5% of all respondents said they were willing to become members of the Citizens Panel. Willingness to participate was lowest amongst '65+ year olds' (21.8%), and amongst those living in the Rural (25.2%) and South East (26.9%) areas. Respondents with children in the household (50%+) were most willing to participate.