



Life in Lancashire Wave 14

Fieldwork 29 June – 05 August 2005
Social Services
Trading Standards service
Satisfaction with Lancashire County Council

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1 Executive Summary

This wave of the Life in Lancashire panel focuses on Social Services, Trading Standards and satisfaction with County Council services. All 1,838 members of the panel were mailed one mailing and a reminder was sent to the panel members who did not respond to the initial mailing. In total 1,577 replies were received at a response of 86%.

1.1 Social Services

- If respondents hadn't seen an elderly neighbour for a few days and were concerned about them, they would most likely call the **police** (84%). One in nine (11%) would call **social services**.
- In the case of a friend with mental health problems who wasn't coping well, panel members would be most likely to call their **nurse** or **carer** (41%). Three in ten (28%) would call **social services**.
- If they were concerned a child was at risk of being abused, a third of panel members would contact the **NSPCC** or **Childline** (33%). Three in ten would contact **social services** (30%).
- Three in ten (31%) agree that **overall social services do a good job**, while similar proportions neither agree nor disagree (34%) or say they don't know (27%). This implies the majority do not know enough about the service to express an opinion on it.
- Knowledge of social services is low. Two-thirds (65%) of the panel either say they know little or nothing at all about social services in Lancashire. Three quarters of respondents (74%) feel not very well or not at all informed about social services.
- More than half of panel members incorrectly thought that **care homes**, **support for the homeless** and **support for drug users** are provided by social services.
- A quarter of the panel (27%) say they have used or have a family member who has **used social services** in the last three years. Two-thirds of users (67%) were satisfied with the service.
- The most preferred means of communication is the **telephone** (88%). Under 25 year-olds are significantly more likely to choose **e-mail** or the **website** (both 30%).

1.2 Trading Standards services

- Half of respondents had had some problems with trading in the last 12 months, most with **poor quality goods and services** (27%) or **problems with pricing** (22%).
- Those with a problem most often **sorted it out with the trader** (52%), but next most likely **did not contact anyone** (32%).
- Panel members are most likely to say they **know a little** about Trading Standards (45%) or that they have **heard of it but that's all** (43%).
- Three in ten of the panel do not feel they have enough information or know enough about where to go for help with **unfair trading** (32%) and **unsafe products** (31%).
- Panel members were given three possible changes to Trading Standards policy. These are for customers to deal with their own complaints, supported by officers, officers only investigating the most serious complaints and an increase in the number of targeted investigations. All three were supported by nearly twice as many as opposed.

1.3 Satisfaction with services

- There has been an 8% increase in the proportion very satisfied with the provision of **household waste disposal sites** on the 2003 BVPI survey.
- There has also been an 8% increase in very satisfied responses for **recycling facilities** at the sites. The **helpfulness of staff** is the factor with the greatest increase, the proportion very satisfied up 13% on 2003.
- **Cultural services** have received similar satisfaction scores to those for the 2003 survey. Only **museums and galleries** have seen a significant increase, the proportion satisfied up 14% on 2003.
- Residents of Rossendale are significantly less satisfied with **theatres and concert halls** (28%), and **parks and open spaces** (53%) compared to panel as a whole.
- Satisfaction scores for each aspect of the **bus service** in Lancashire were statistically similar to the corresponding score from 2003.

- Satisfaction with public transport information provision (41%) is down significantly on 2003 (46%), as are the other factors of information provision.
- Respondents are similarly satisfied with complaint handling as on previous surveys (27%). The most usual complaint is on roads and to highway services, though many complaints made to, or thought made to Lancashire County Council are actually for district council services.
- Overall satisfaction with Lancashire County Council is significantly up on the 2003 survey, to 63% from 49%. This result must be taken with caution, since the methodology of this research project is different to that for the BVPI survey, and the sample are atypical of the Lancashire population because of their experience through the panel. However, the finding does match predictions by polling company MORI for an increase in council satisfaction since 2003.

2 Introduction

Lancashire County Council has used Life in Lancashire regularly since August 2001. A panel of willing participants is recruited and is approached on a regular basis to seek their views on a range of topics and themes. Panel members are voluntary participants in the research they complete and no incentives are given for completion.

The panel has been designed to be a representative cross-section of the county's population. The results for each survey are weighted in order to reflect the demographic profile of the county's population.

The panel provides access to a sufficiently large sample of the population so that reliable results can be reported at a county wide level. It also provides data at a number of sub-area and sub-group levels.

Each Life in Lancashire wave is themed. Firstly, it enables sufficient coverage on a particular topic to be able to provide insight into that topic. And secondly, it comes across better to the residents completing the questionnaires if there is a clear theme (or 2-3 clear themes) within each survey.

The panel is refreshed periodically. New members are recruited to the panel and some current members are retired on a random basis. This means that the panel remains fresh and is not subject to conditioning ie the views of panel members become too informed with county council services to be unrepresentative of the population as a whole. The current panel was recruited in September 2003 with a top-up recruitment undertaken in June 2004, so this effect should still be small.

3 Research Objectives

The research objectives for wave 14 focus on the topics of Social Services, Trading Standards and satisfaction with county council services. The main questions areas looked at:

- Awareness of and satisfaction with Social Services in Lancashire.
- Awareness of the Trading Standards service.
- Support for changes in policy for the Trading Standards service.
- Satisfaction with key county council services and overall satisfaction with the Council.

4 Methodology

Wave 14 of Life in Lancashire was sent to 1,838 members of the panel on 29 June. A reminder was sent to non-respondents on 20 July. The fieldwork ended on 5 August 2005.

No incentive for respondents to complete the questionnaire was given. In total 1,577 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 86%.

All data are weighted by gender, age, ethnicity and district to reflect the Lancashire overall population, and figures are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated. The weighted responses have been scaled down to match the effective response of 1,267 which is the equivalent size of the data if it had not been weighted and was a perfect random sample.

4.1 Limitations

The table below shows the sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
50	14%	13%	8%
100	10%	9%	6%
200	7%	6%	4%
500	4%	4%	3%
1000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2%	2%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1,000 respond with a particular answer, the chance are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 47% and 53% (ie +/- 3%), versus a complete coverage of the entire Lancashire population using the same procedure.

5 Main Research Findings

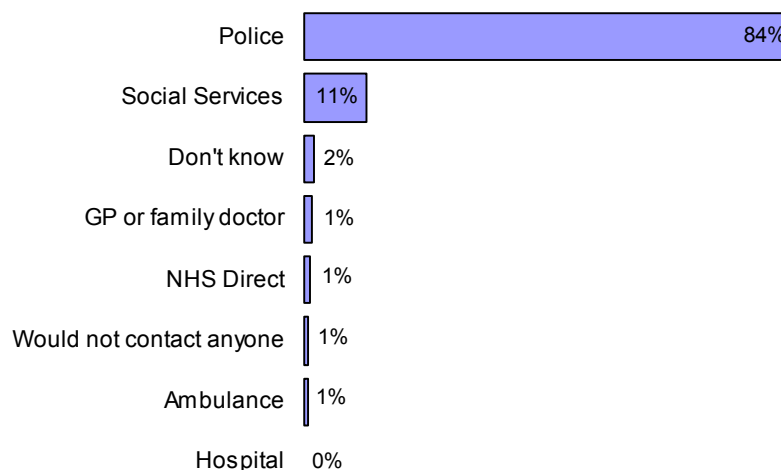
A marked up questionnaire can be found in Appendix 8.2.

5.1 Social Services

The first section of the wave 14 questionnaire dealt with social services in Lancashire, looking at panel members' awareness of it and the services it provides, satisfaction and preferred communication. The first questions, before mentioning social services, asked who panel members would contact in three difficult situations.

Chart 1 - If you hadn't seen an elderly neighbour for a few days and you were concerned about them, which of the following would you contact first?

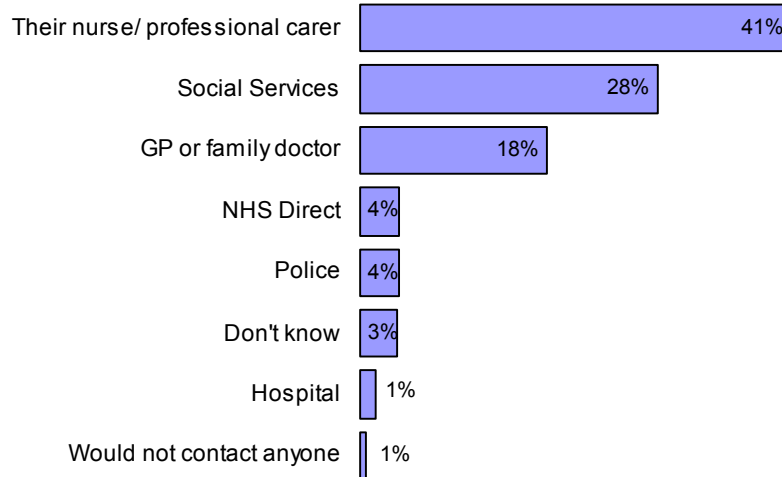
Please assume that no-one else has been to visit them for a few days and you do not know how to contact their relative(s).



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

The overwhelming majority of the panel would call the police in this instance (84%), with only one in nine (11%) calling social services. The next question followed on from this by asking who respondents would call if a friend with mental health problems wasn't coping very well.

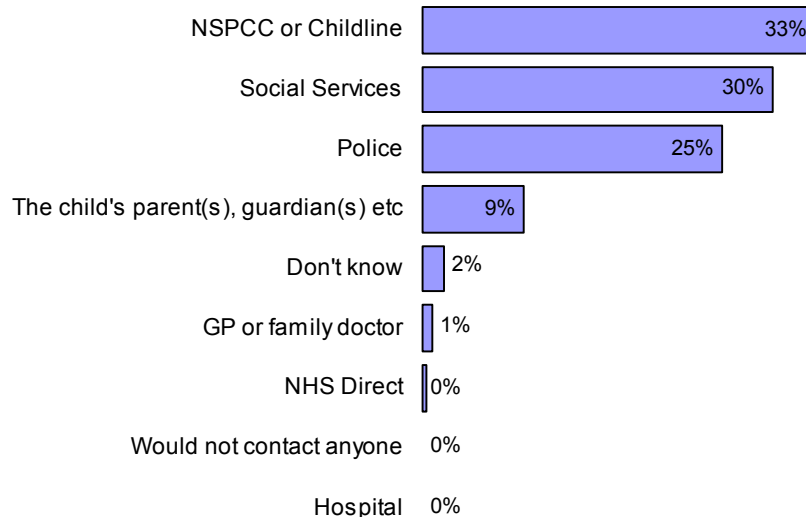
Chart 2 - If you had a friend with a mental health problem who wasn't coping very well, which of the following would you contact first?
Please assume that (s)he is living in his/her own home and you do not know how to contact his/her relative(s).



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

Social services receives a much higher proportion of answers here (28%), but still is not the first place most respondents would go. Social services was the top answer for panel members aged over 60 however (37%).

Chart 3 - If you thought a child was in danger of being abused in any way, which of the following would you contact first?
Please assume the child is not related to you.



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

Again, three in ten of the respondents would contact social services (30%) in this instance, and again it is not the top answer. One in three of the panel would contact the NSPCC or Childline (33%). One quarter would contact

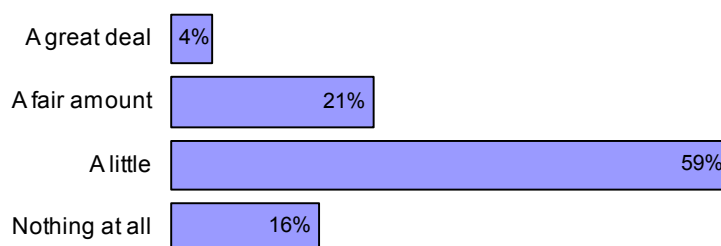
the police. The youngest respondents group, those aged under 25, are especially likely to contact the NSPCC or Childline (52%), perhaps reflecting a greater awareness or trust of the service. Men (37%) and panel members from a black or ethnic minority background (47%) are most likely to name the police as their first point of contact. Interestingly, respondents with children in their household are most likely to name social services (35%).

The same set of three questions were asked on the first wave of Life in Lancashire in August 2001, (with a completely different panel makeup). The answers have changed little since then, with only statistically similar proportions saying they would contact social services.

Situation	Life in Lancashire Wave 14 (2005)		Life in Lancashire Wave 1 (2001)	
Not seen elderly neighbour	Police	84%	Police	77%
	Social Services	11%	Social Services	9%
Person with mental health problem not coping	Nurse/carer	41%	Nurse/carer	34%
	Social Services	28%	Social Services	32%
Child in danger of abuse	Childline	33%	Childline	32%
	Social Services	30%	Social Services	29%

The fact that social services is not the overall top choice of contact in any of these situations should be an opportunity for improved communications, particularly for the services that it provides and the ways it can help vulnerable people. This opportunity is further shown in the next question.

Chart 4 - How much do you feel you know about the work of Social Services in Lancashire?

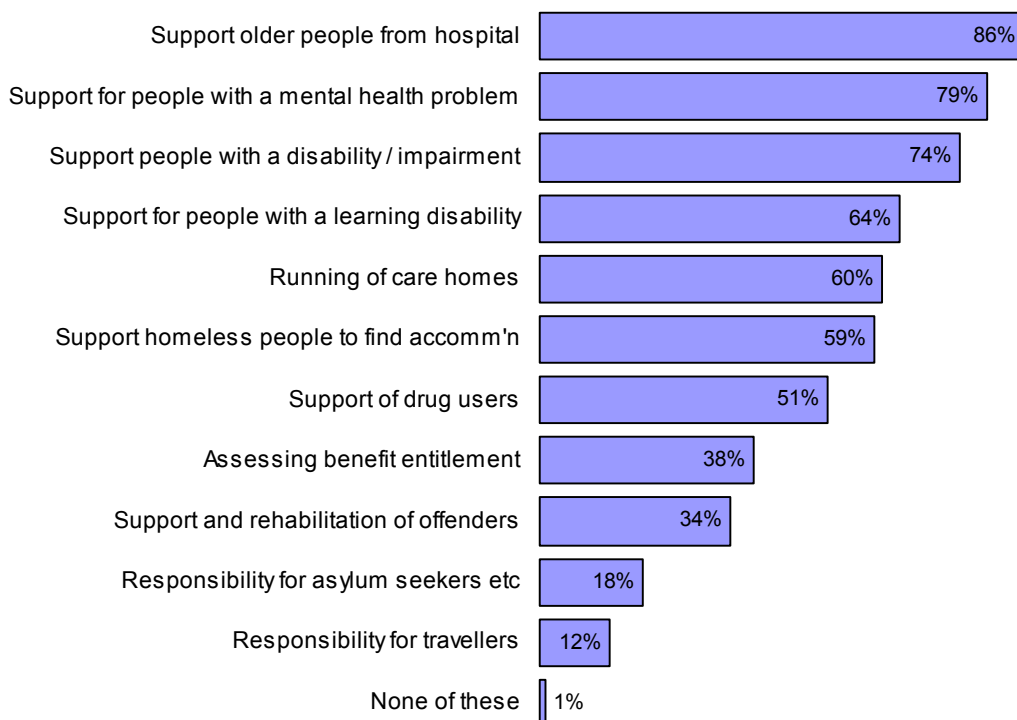


Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

Only a quarter of panel members think they know **a fair amount** or more about social services and three in five only say they know a little. The two youngest groups are more likely to say they know nothing at all about social services, (26% of 16-24 year olds and 21% of 25-44 year olds). Panel members with a disability are significantly more likely to say they know about social services, (35% say a fair amount or more).

Panel members were then given a list of possible services that social services could offer. The top four answers displayed below are all services that social services provide, with the others all not being. While it is promising that the top answers are all correct, three in five incorrectly thought that social services were responsible for running care homes (60%) and supporting homeless people (59%). Over a third thought social services had something to do with assessing benefit entitlement (38%), mistaking it for social security. It may be worthwhile therefore to improve communications to educate the public as to what social services do and do not do.

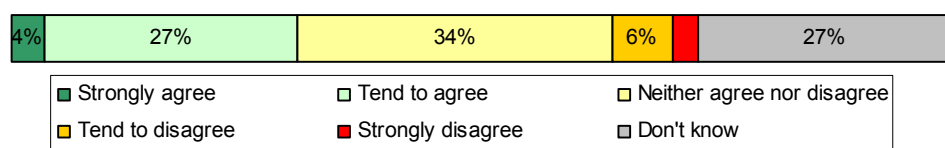
Chart 5 - Which, if any, of the following services do you think Social Services provides?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

The next question asked respondents whether social services do a good job.

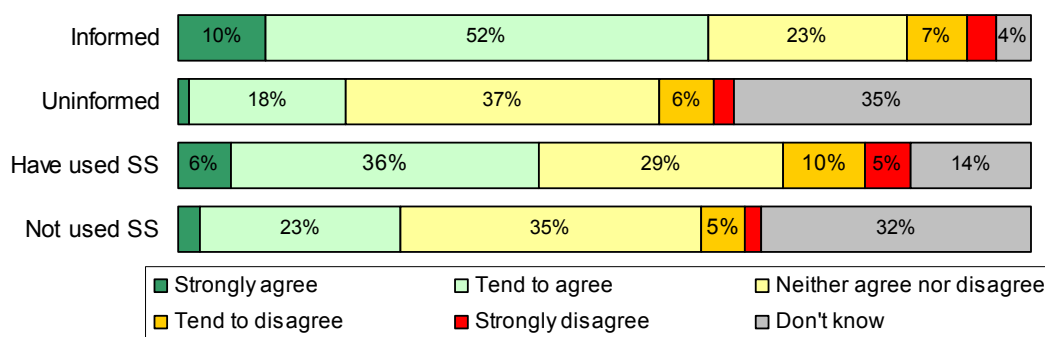
Chart 6 - How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Overall Social Services in Lancashire do a good job



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

Almost a third of the panel (31%) agree that social services do a good job, though a quarter say they don't know (27%) and another third neither agree nor disagree, implying the majority of the public do not know enough to have an opinion. Only a small proportion (9%) disagree that social services do a good job. The oldest age group, the over 60s, is significantly more likely to agree (46%) than the rest of the panel. Comparing this question against the later questions on how informed panel members feel about the service, and whether they or a family member have used social services in the last three years gives the chart below.

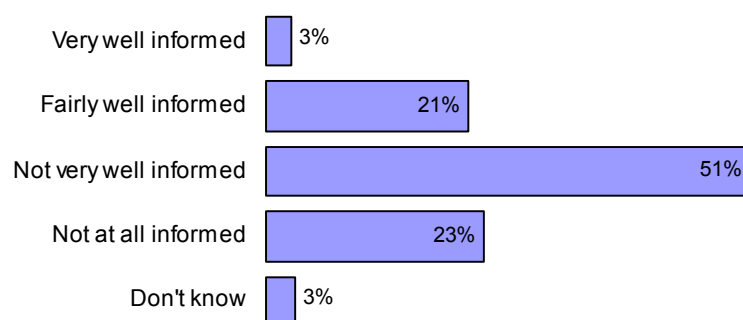
**Chart 7 - How much do you agree or disagree with the following?
Overall Social Services in Lancashire do a good job
Vs Feel informed about social services and Have used social services
in the last 3 years (or family have)**



Weighted base: Informed (301), uninformed (893), service user (904), non-user (324)

People who feel informed about social services are much more likely to feel positive towards the service. This is also true of those who have personally used social services themselves in the last three years, or whose family have used it. This highlights the importance of improving communications from social services.

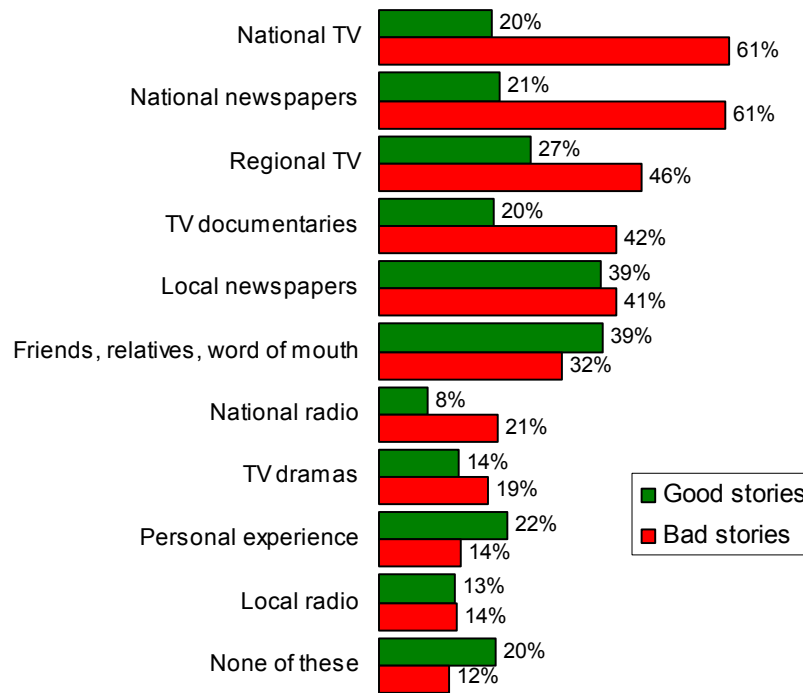
Chart 8 - And how well informed do you feel about Social Services in Lancashire?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

Only a quarter of the panel felt informed on social services (24%), while three times as many people felt not very or not at all informed (74%).

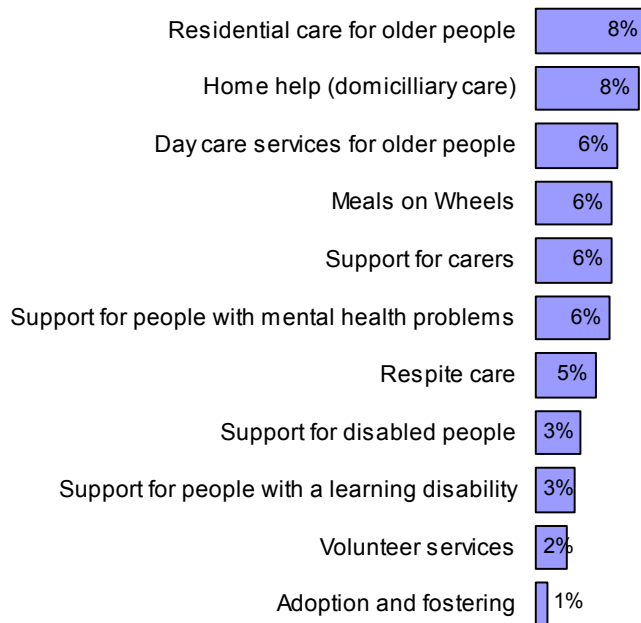
**Chart 9 - a) Where have you seen or heard good stories about social services generally?
b) And where have you seen or heard bad stories about social services generally?**



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

Respondents are most likely to have seen bad stories about social services from **national TV** or **national newspapers** (both 61%), and most likely to have heard good stories by **word of mouth** or in **local newspapers** (both 39%). Responses are similar by demographics and also by knowledge of the service. Respondents who say they are informed are more likely to get good stories from **word of mouth** or **personal experience** however.

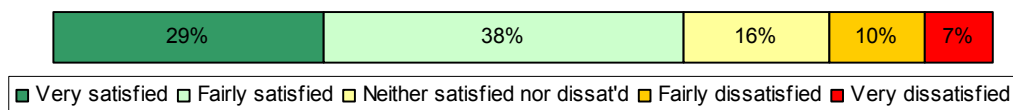
Chart 10 - Have you or your family used any of the following services in the last 3 years?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

Three-quarters of the panel say they and their family have not used any social services (73%). Those who had were then asked how satisfied they were with the service. Two-thirds of users were satisfied (67%). While only a minority of the panel answered this question, there was a significant difference between respondents with a disability (35% very satisfied) to those without (23%).

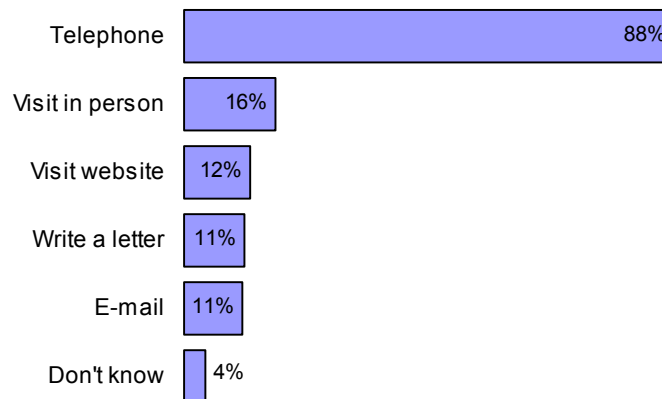
Chart 11 - Overall, how satisfied are/were you with the service/s you received?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 471, Weighted 355)

The vast majority of the public would prefer to contact social services in Lancashire by telephone (88%). Electronic communications are most likely to be preferred by under 25 year-olds with three in ten choosing the website or email (both 30%).

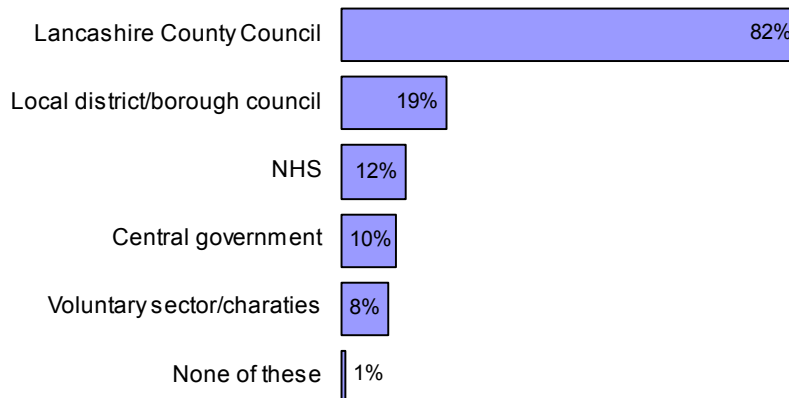
Chart 12 - How would you contact Social Services in Lancashire if you needed to?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

Finally for the section, eight in ten of the panel correctly identified that social services are provided by Lancashire County Council. Since this is a survey for Lancashire County Council, it is not surprising that the majority were correct on this, but many people thought the service was provided by a combination of different bodies. This is therefore another area for communication to concentrate on.

Chart 13 - And which, if any, of the following organisations do you think provides Social Services in Lancashire?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1577, Weighted 1174)

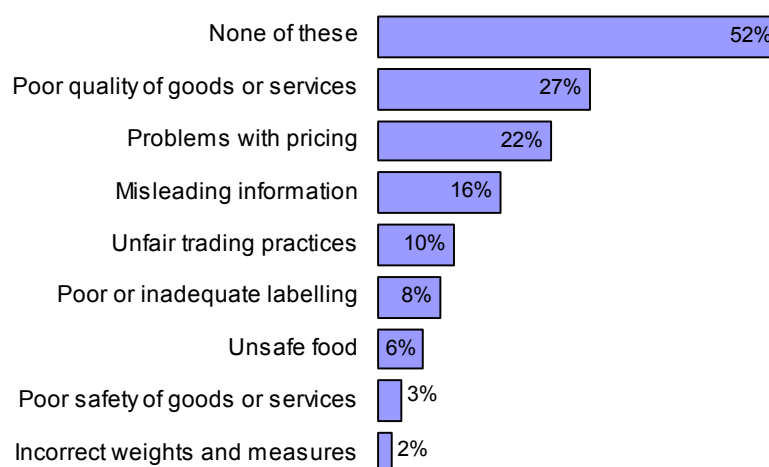
5.2 Trading Standards Service

The second main section of the questionnaire dealt with protecting the consumer and developing Trading Standard's policy.

5.2.1 Protecting the consumer

Panel members were asked whether they had experienced any problems with goods or services in the past year.

Chart 14 - In the last 12 months, have you or a member of your household experienced any of the following with any goods (including food) or services purchased?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1594, Weighted 1191)

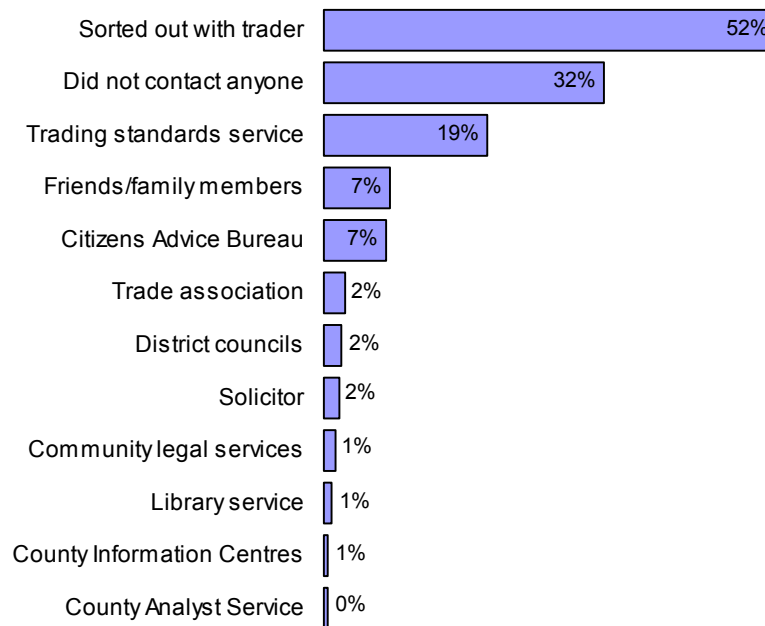
About half of the panel have had no problems in the last year, two-thirds of the over 60s (65%). The most common problems are shown in the table below, compared with the same questions asked in wave 7 of Life in Lancashire from 2003, (with a completely different panel).

Trading Problem	Life in Lancashire Wave 14 (2005)	Life in Lancashire Wave 7 (2003)
Poor quality goods or services	27%	25%
Problems with pricing	22%	22%
Misleading information	16%	16%

The similarity to the earlier survey is striking, and shows that the priorities for the Trading Standards Service have not changed in the last two years.

Those who had a problem then were asked what they did about the problem.

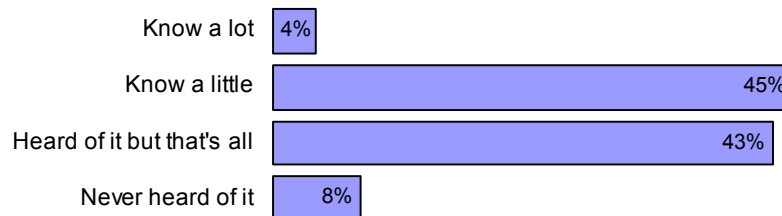
Chart 15 - Which, if any of the following did you contact about the problem(s)?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 782, Weighted 643)

For most demographic groups the majority sorted out the problem with the trader. The exception was the oldest, over 60s group, who were slightly more likely to not contact anyone (40%).

Chart 16 - How much would you say you know about Lancashire County Council's Trading Standards service?

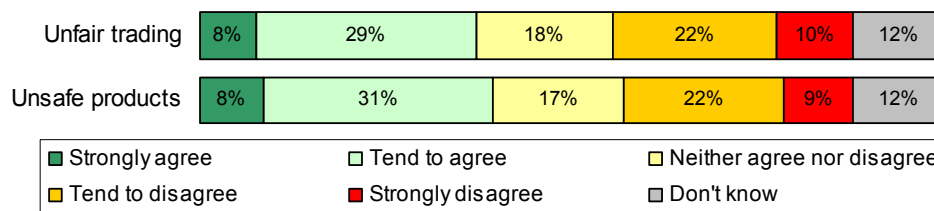


Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1594, Weighted 1191)

Only one in twenty-five of the panel say they know a lot about Trading Standards (4%). The youngest group, (aged 16-24), are significantly less likely to say they have heard of it than any other age group, (only 22% know a little or more).

Following on from this, panel members were next asked about whether they would be able to deal with unfair trading and unsafe products.

Chart 17 - Do you feel that you have enough information, (or know who to contact for help), to be able to deal with the following problems?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1594, Weighted 1191)

About two in five of the panel feel capable dealing with unfair trading (37%) and unsafe trading (39%), but still three in ten do not. As before, 16-24 year-olds are the least confident, with only 26% agreeing for unfair trading and 22% for unsafe products. Clearly then, the youngest age group is an important one for future communications.

5.2.2 Policy development

The second and final section for Trading Standards was to aid policy development. Three possible policy changes were put before the panel members, and they were invited to say whether they would support or oppose the changes. Since the wording of such complicated questions is important, these are laid out in the tables below.

Proposed change 1
Currently: Most people who complain to Trading Standards are given help by advisors.
Proposed change: Advisors to help customers resolve the complaints themselves, providing further assistance if needed. This would mean more time was available for advisors to deal with the more vulnerable consumers or more serious complaints.
Q: How much would you support or oppose the above change, with trading standards advisors helping consumers resolve their problems themselves? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Proposed change 2
Currently: All complaints received are investigated regardless of their seriousness, from minor textile mislabelling to major consumer frauds.
Proposed change: Only the more serious or widespread complaints will be individually investigated by trading standards officers, though all will be recorded and reviewed for appropriate action or referral. This would enable more thorough investigations of more serious complaints and malpractices.

Q: How much would you support or oppose the above change, where advisors only investigate the most serious complaints? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

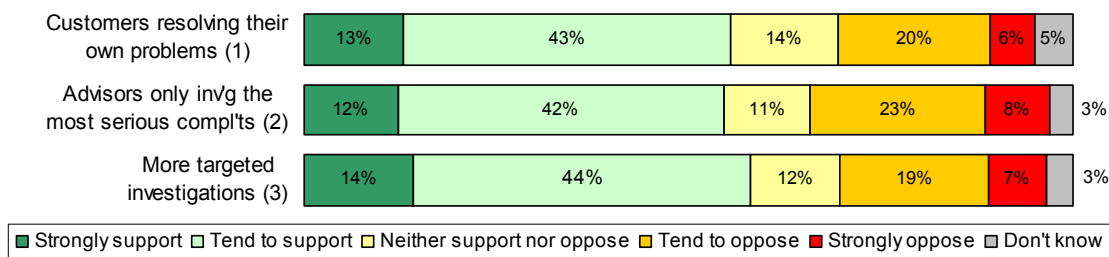
Proposed change 3

Currently: The majority of Trading Standards inspections are currently **routine** inspections of business premises identified as low, medium and high risk.

Proposed change: Reducing the number of routine inspections and concentrating on **targeted** inspections based on intelligence such as customer complaints. This would mean inspections would cover a less broad area but would target the areas of concern.

Q: How much would you support or oppose the above change, with less routine and more targeted investigations? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Chart 18 - Support and opposition towards policy changes



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1594, Weighted 1191)

There is a general agreement towards all of the policy changes (54% to 58%), with a sizeable minority opposing (26% to 31%). This gives a good mandate to change to the policies, with approaching twice as many people supporting the proposals as opposing.

Demographically, there were few differences. Those with children in the household (30%) and 25 to 44 year-olds (30%) were both significantly more likely to disagree with proposal 1, compared with the rest of the panel. These groups have a wide cross-membership, and possibly the time demands of having children reduce the appeal of having to resolve trading problems themselves. However, a greater proportion of both groups supported the proposal.

5.3 Satisfaction with Lancashire County Council

The final section of the questionnaire dealt with overall satisfaction with the County Council and its services. The questions were taken from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) survey. This was last taken in 2003, with a postal questionnaire sent out to four thousand homes. The following questions are key performance indicators for Lancashire County Council and so have been asked to measure any change in the interim between the triennial BVPI surveys, the next due in 2006.

The following measures, while indicative of general trends, are not strictly directly comparable with the results from the BVPI surveys of 2000 and 2003. This is because these measures were taken from members of the public who have agreed to join a County Council citizen's panel, rather than the direct mailing of random households. The members of Life in Lancashire are likely to be more disposed towards the County Council, or at least more aware of the Council's services. Care therefore needs to be taken in interpreting these results and using them for decision making.

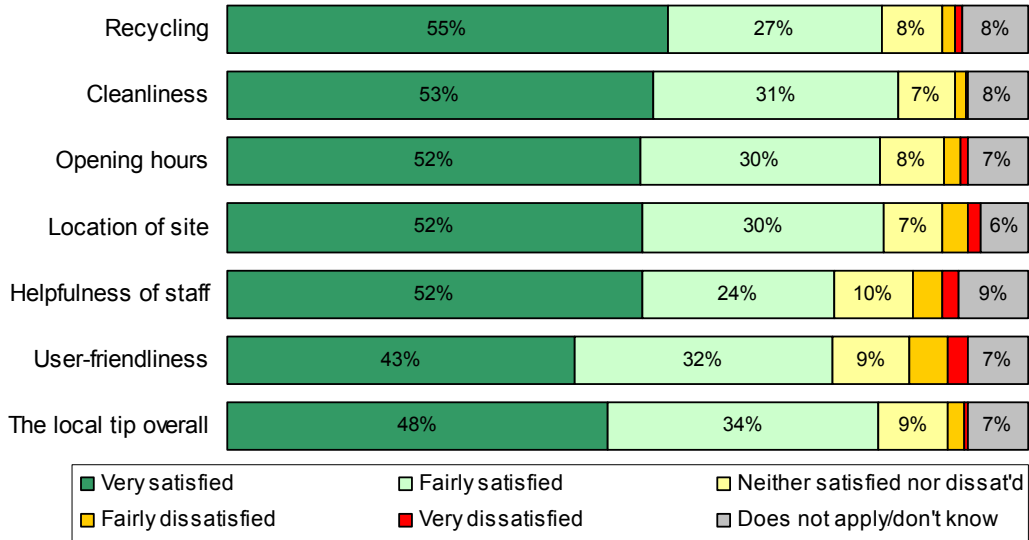
5.3.1 Household Waste Disposal Service

Panel members were firstly asked about their local tip, and given examples of household waste disposal sites around Lancashire. Eighty per cent of respondents said they had used a local tip in the last twelve months, giving a good service usage amongst respondents. Panel members over 60 years old (73%), those from socio-economic groups DE¹ (71%) and particularly respondents from an ethnic minority (46%) were all significantly less likely to have used a site in the last 12 months. Pendle residents are also significantly less likely to have used a site (67%).

The vast majority of respondents are fairly or very satisfied with each attribute of the service, with at least three-quarters satisfied with each one. The proportion very satisfied with recycling is up 8% from 2003, and the proportion very satisfied with the helpfulness of staff is up 13%.

¹ For an description of socio-economic groups, please see appendix 8.1

Chart 19 - Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following elements of the local tip

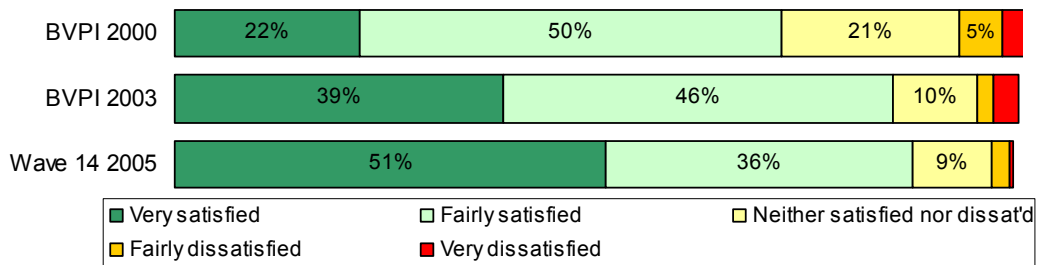


Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1494, Weighted 1196)

Looking between users and non-users, we find that users are most likely to be very satisfied with the service overall (55%) and perhaps unsurprisingly, non-users are most likely to they don't know (41%). Looking demographically, BME panel members are significantly less likely to be satisfied with all aspects of the service, presumably due to the lower usage mentioned above. Burnley residents are significantly less likely to be satisfied with the tip overall (66% satisfied).

Comparing between surveys, as below, the proportion satisfied with the waste disposal service overall appears to have increased. Matching the format in which the ODPM released the data, don't know answers have been excluded.

Chart 20 - Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following elements of the local tip
The local tip overall (BV90c)



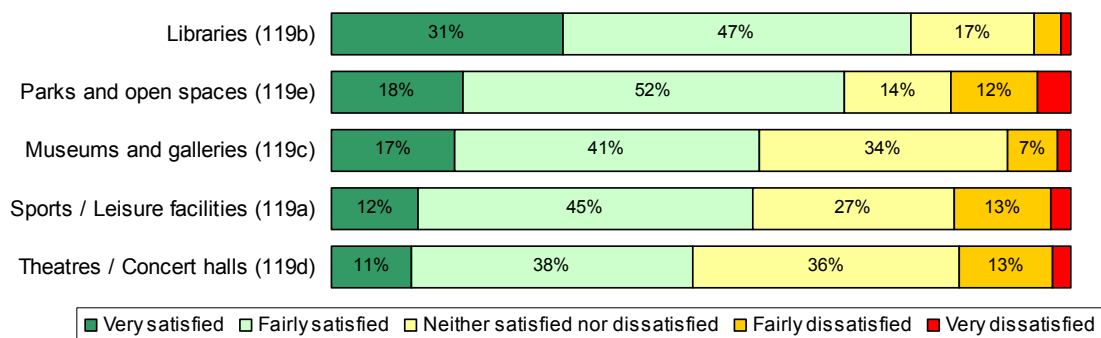
Base: All valid responses (2000 – 997; 2003 – 770; Life in Lancashire Wave 14 2005 - Unweighted 1378, Weighted 1114)

Remembering the limitations mentioned earlier, there does appear to be an upward trend. The 8% difference between the 2003 and current data is enough to be statistically significant, so long as the samples are comparable. Certainly this is an encouraging result for waste disposal services. The helpfulness of staff is the individual factor with the greatest increase, the proportion very satisfied up 13% on 2003.

5.3.2 Cultural and Recreational Services

Respondents were asked their opinion on each of four aspects of cultural and leisure services. The proportions satisfied with libraries, museums and galleries, sports and leisure facilities and events, and theatres and concert halls are given below. As on the BVPI survey, respondents were not given a “don’t know” answer on these questions.

Chart 21 - Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following elements of the service which we provide.



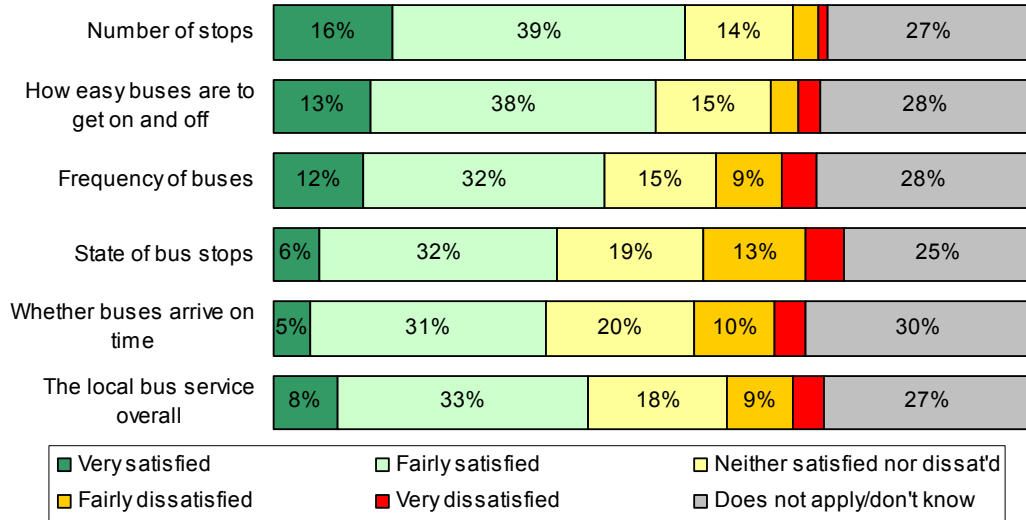
All of these results are statistically similar to the 2003 BVPI survey scores, with the exception of museums and galleries, nearly three in five were satisfied on this survey (57%), compared to 43% in 2003.

By demographics, the oldest group of panel members aged over 60 are most satisfied with libraries; the 84% satisfied being significantly more than all other age groups. Residents of Rossendale are significantly less satisfied with theatres and concert halls (28%), and parks and open spaces (53%) compared to panel as a whole.

5.3.3 Bus services

The panel were next asked their satisfaction with five aspects of the local bus service, and their overall satisfaction with it.

Chart 22 - Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following elements of the service which we provide

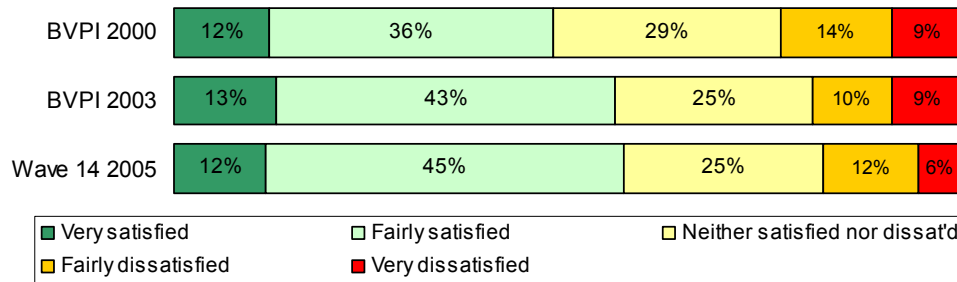


Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1485, Weighted 1207)

Demographically, there are few splits, however people aged 60 or over are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the frequency of buses (53%) and the bus service overall (53% compared to 41% for the whole panel). Rossendale residents are the most dissatisfied with the state of bus stops (37% compared with 17% overall).

Comparing with the BVPI surveys, we see a very similar result to the 2003 survey.

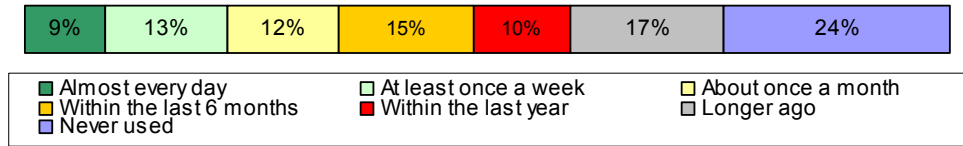
Chart 23 - Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following elements of the service which we provide The local bus service overall (BV104)



Base: All valid responses (2000 – 997; 2003 – 770; Life in Lancashire Wave 14 2005 - Unweighted 1378, Weighted 1114)

Less than two thirds of the panel have used the local bus service in the last year (59%).

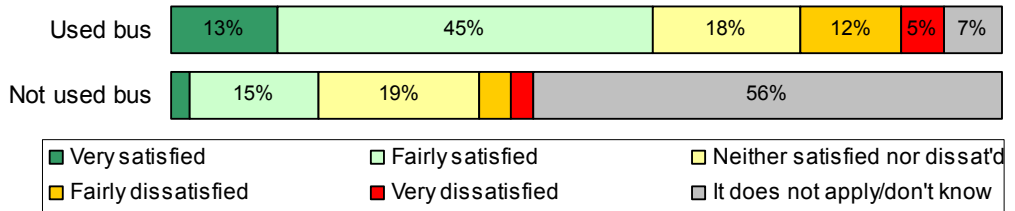
Chart 24 - How frequently, if at all, do you use the local bus service?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1485, Weighted 1207)

Bus service users, (those having used the local service in the last year), are far more likely to be satisfied with the service, and to express an opinion on it.

Chart 25 - Have you used the local bus service in the last 12 months vs how satisfied are you with the local bus service overall?

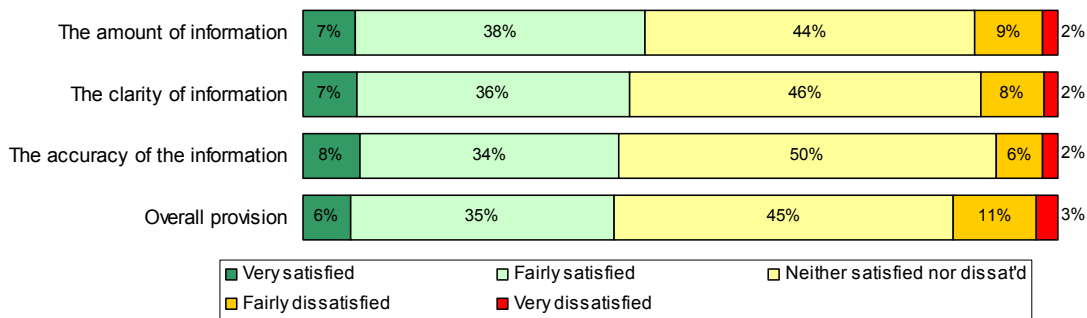


Base: All respondents (Users 876, Non-users 629)

5.3.4 Public Transport Information

The next section dealt with the provision of public transport information.

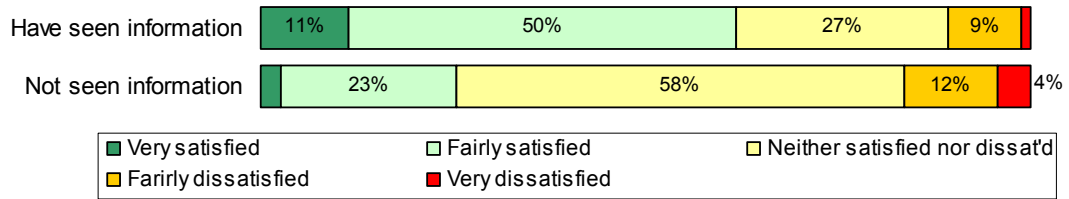
Chart 26 - Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following elements of the information on transport we provide.



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1485, Weighted 1207)

Nearly half of the panel members have seen information on public transport in the last year (42%), which is significantly higher than for the 2003 BVPI survey (33%).

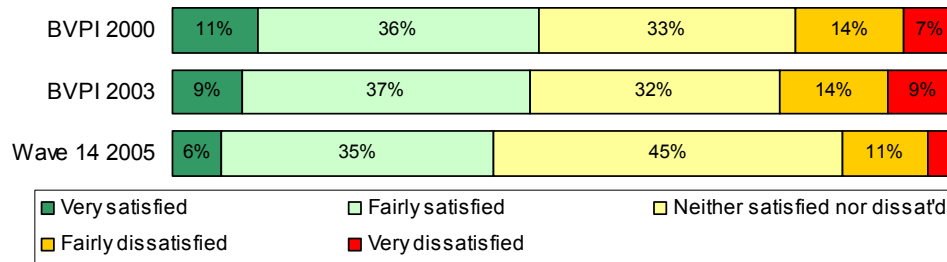
Chart 27 - How satisfied are you with transport information provision overall vs have you seen any of the information provided on local transport services in the last 12 months?



Base: All respondents (seen information 643, not seen information 793)

The overall satisfaction with information provision is slightly lower on this survey; enough to be statistically significant assuming the samples are perfectly comparable.

Chart 28 - How satisfied are you with transport information provision overall? (BV103)



Base: All valid responses (2000 – 997; 2003 – 770; Life in Lancashire Wave 14 2005 - Unweighted 1378, Weighted 1114)

5.3.5 Corporate satisfaction

The final section dealt with the performance indicators for complaints handling and overall satisfaction with the County Council.

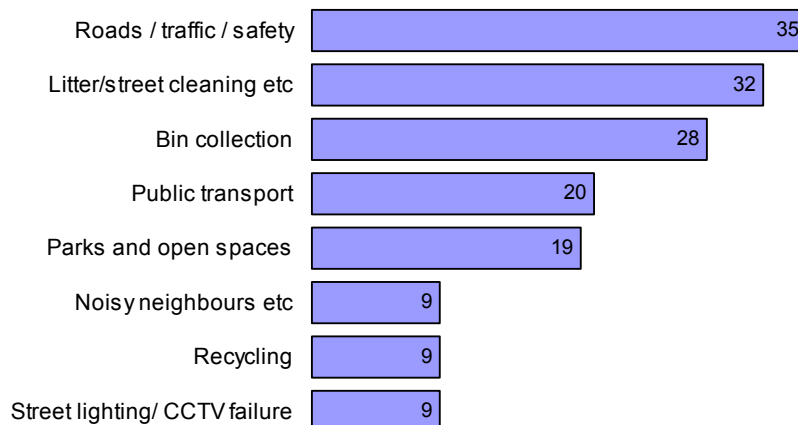
Chart 29 - Have you contacted Lancashire County Council with a complaint in the last 12 months?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1485, Weighted 1207)

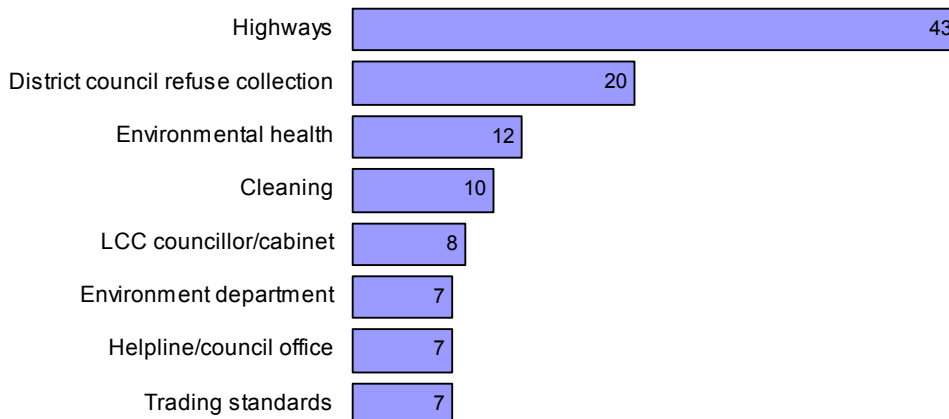
One in seven (14%) of respondents say they have made a complaint to Lancashire County Council in the last year, matching that of the BVPI surveys in 2003 (14%) and 2000 (15%). The actual number of complaints by type and where the complaint was made are shown in the next two charts.

Chart 30 - What did the complaint you made refer to?



Base: Top eight responses, Unweighted count

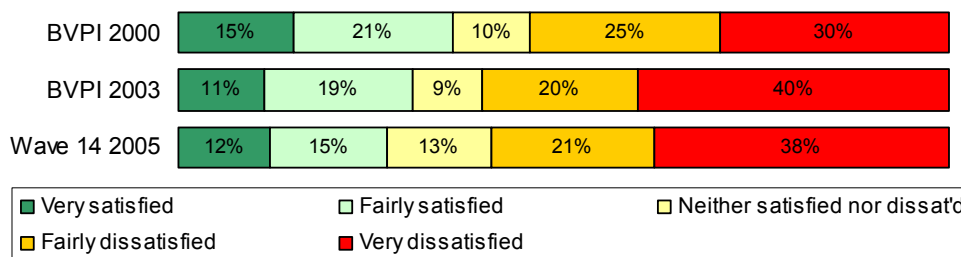
Chart 31 - Which department(s) did you contact about the complaint?



Base: Top eight responses, Unweighted count

From both these charts we can see that many of the complaints thought to be made to Lancashire County Council are for services provided by the local district council, such as refuse collection, (and made to the district council in this case).

Chart 32 - And finally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the complaint was handled? (BV4)

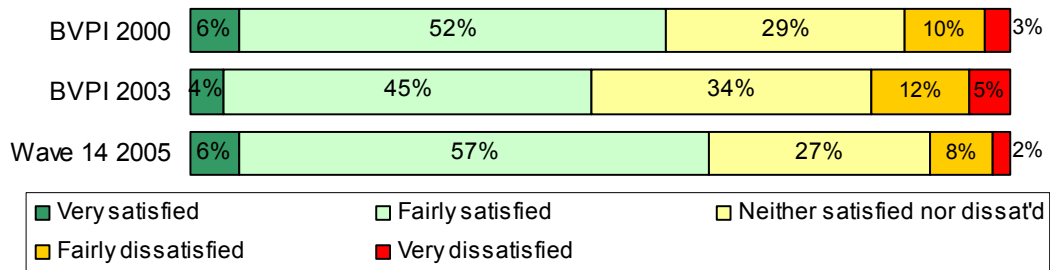


Base: All valid responses (2000 – 151; 2003 – 174; Life in Lancashire Wave 14 2005 - 191)

Due to the small number of people who have, (or think they have), complained to Lancashire County Council, the proportions satisfied and dissatisfied are not significantly different by year. However, while the figures may not be getting worse, three in five of people being dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint is clearly a cause for concern. Even though the question is about how the complaint is handled, a negative outcome can affect overall perception. This means that the reasons for any decision need to be communicated clearly to the complainant, showing respect for their opinions. In cases where the complaint relates to a district council service, the complainant needs to be referred to the correct department. The majority of people who complained about bin collection were very dissatisfied with how their complaint was handled for example, even though most of these actually appear to have complained to their district council. This result may be unavoidable due to people being confused by two tier councils. A proposed A to Z of County Council services may help with this in the future.

The final question on the questionnaire asked respondents for their overall level of satisfaction with the County Council.

Chart 33 - Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Lancashire County Council runs things? (BV3)



Base: All valid responses (2000 – 997; 2003 – 770; Life in Lancashire Wave 14 2005 - Unweighted 1378, Weighted 1114)

The current survey has shown a significant increase over the 2003 BVPI survey, an increase of 9% of residents satisfied, and an increase in net satisfaction from 32% in 2003 to 49% on this survey. As described earlier, these differences may be due to the different make up of the panel to the wider public. However recent results from polling company MORI² tracking satisfaction scores for all councils shows that mid-2003 marked a ten-year low. By the end of 2004, this had recovered to almost the highest ratings in the last decade. This is suggested to be because of the very high council tax rises of 2003, and the subsequent limiting of services along with improving services, particularly visible services such as street cleaning. This would mean that rises in overall satisfaction with the County Council could be expected; however the size of the increase is an indication of a strong

² <http://www.mori.com/pubinfo/bp/be-happy.shtml>

result. The different methodology however means we can only be sure when the next BVPI survey is undertaken.

Looking through the demographics, there are surprisingly few differences. The over 60 age group are significantly more likely to be satisfied (70%) than 25-44 year olds (58%). Panel members from an ethnic minority are significantly less satisfied (48%) than white respondents (64%), which is an area for concern. By district, only panel members from Rossendale are significantly less satisfied with the Council (46% satisfied compared with 63% overall). Comparing with the last BVPI survey and the Life in Lancashire 2003 face-to-face survey, the same finding for ethnic minority respondents was found on the BVPI 2003 survey and the same finding for the oldest age group was found from the Life in Lancashire 2003 survey.

6 Summary

6.1 Social Services

- If respondents hadn't seen an elderly neighbour for a few days and were concerned about them, they would most likely call the **police** (84%). One in nine (11%) would call **social services**.
- In the case of a friend with mental health problems who wasn't coping well, panel members would be most likely to call their **nurse** or **carer** (41%). Three in ten (28%) would call **social services**.
- If they were concerned a child was at risk of being abused, a third of panel members would contact the **NSPCC** or **Childline** (33%). Three in ten would contact **social services** (30%).
- Three in ten (31%) agree that **overall social services do a good job**, while similar proportions neither agree nor disagree (34%) or say they don't know (27%). This implies the majority do not know enough about the service to express an opinion on it.
- When asked directly, knowledge of social services is low. Two-thirds (65%) of the panel either say they know little or nothing at all about social services in Lancashire. Three quarters of respondents (74%) feel not very well or not at all informed about social services. More than half of panel members incorrectly thought that **care homes**, **support for the homeless** and **support for drug users** are provided by social services.
- A quarter of the panel (27%) say they have used or have a family member who has **used social services** in the last three years. Two-thirds of users (67%) were satisfied with the service.
- The most preferred means of communication is the **telephone** (88%). Under 25 year-olds are significantly more likely to choose **email** or the **website** (both 30%).
- The majority of panel members correctly answered that social services in Lancashire are provided by Lancashire County Council (82%), though many thought it was run in partnership with other organisations, principally the district council or NHS.

6.2 Trading Standards Services

- Half of respondents had had some problems with trading in the last 12 months, most with **poor quality goods and services** (27%) or **problems with pricing** (22%).
- Those with a problem most often **sorted it out with the trader** (52%), but next most likely **did not contact anyone** (32%).
- Panel members are most likely to say they **know a little** about Trading Standards (45%) or that they have **heard of it but that's all** (43%).
- Three in ten of the panel do not feel they have enough information or know enough about where to go for help with **unfair trading** (32%) and **unsafe products** (31%).
- Panel members were given three possible changes to Trading Standards policy. These are for customers to deal with their own complaints, supported by officers, officers only investigating the most serious complaints and an increase in the number of targeted investigations. All three were supported by nearly twice as many as opposed.

6.3 County Council Performance

- There has been an 8% increase in the proportion very satisfied with the provision of **household waste disposal sites** on the 2003 BVPI survey.
- There has also been an 8% in very satisfied responses for **recycling facilities** at the sites. The **helpfulness of staff** is the factor with the greatest increase, the proportion very satisfied up 13% on 2003.
- **Cultural services** have received similar satisfaction scores to those for the 2003 survey. Only **museums and galleries** have seen a significant increase, the proportion satisfied up 14% on 2003.
- Residents of Rossendale are significantly less satisfied with **theatres and concert halls** (28%), and **parks and open spaces** (53%) compared to panel as a whole.
- Satisfaction scores for each aspect of the **bus service** in Lancashire were statistically similar to the corresponding score from 2003.
- Satisfaction with public transport information provision (41%) is down significantly on 2003 (46%), as are the other factors of information provision.
- Respondents are similarly satisfied with complaint handling as on previous surveys (27%). The most usual complaint is on roads and to highway services, though many complaints made to, or thought made to Lancashire County Council are actually for district council services.
- Overall satisfaction with Lancashire County Council is significantly up on the 2003 survey, to 63% from 49%. This result must be taken with caution, since the methodology of this research project is different to that for the BVPI survey. However, this does match predictions by polling company MORI for an increase in council satisfaction since 2003.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Social Services

Communications are a key area for Lancashire County Council's Social Services. Social services is not the first answer for any of the typical situations given at the start of the survey and most people feel they are not very informed with social services generally. This means that large proportions of people do not possess enough information to have an opinion on whether social services in Lancashire do a good job. This is always likely to be the case for a service that only a minority of people use, however it is important in situations where social services need to be involved and they are not being contacted. It is also important for the service with the second highest expenditure in the County Council to justify its importance and work. Local newspapers and word of mouth are the places where people have heard most good stories about the service generally, while national TV and newspapers are the places people have heard most negative stories. Since there were nearly as many bad stories as good stories from word of mouth, more positive stories in local newspapers will increase awareness and the proportions having heard a good story about social services.

7.2 Trading Standards

Around half the panel have had some trading standards problem in the last year. About half of these sorted out the problem with the trader themselves, but a third of people did not contact anyone. This may be because the problems were small, but may also be because they did not know where to go for more information, had enough confidence or sufficient knowledge of their rights. More people did not contact anyone than contacted the Trading Standards service. This means that communications is a key priority for trading standards, for example by highlighting case studies of how people have benefited from using the service in local newspapers.

Continuing from this, three in ten of the panel do not feel they have enough information to deal with unfair trading and unsafe products, especially under 25 year-olds and older people. These have to be groups to raise awareness amongst.

There is a mandate for changing to the three new policies respondents were asked on. This means customers resolving their own problems, officers only investigating the more serious complaints and an increase in targeted investigations.

7.3 County Council Performance

Satisfaction with the local tip appears to be up on 2003, which itself was up from the 2000 survey. Usage of the service is lower in Pendle and amongst ethnic minority panel members; this is something to investigate further in the future.

Satisfaction with cultural services has remained statistically similar to that from 2003. The oldest age group, those over 60 years-old are most likely to be satisfied with libraries. Rossendale residents are significantly less likely to be satisfied with parks and open spaces and theatres and concert halls.

Satisfaction with bus services have remained steady compared with 2003, though satisfaction with public transport information is down slightly.

Respondents are similarly satisfied with complaint handling as on previous surveys (27%). The most usual complaint is on roads and to highway services, though many complaints made to, or thought made to Lancashire County Council are actually for district council services.

Overall satisfaction with Lancashire County Council is significantly up on the 2003 survey, to 63% from 49%. This result must be taken with caution, since the methodology of this research project is different to that for the BVPI survey, the respondents being members of a citizens' panel, and not every question from the BVPI survey has been asked on this questionnaire which may well also have an effect. However, this finding does match predictions by polling company MORI for an increase in council satisfaction since 2003. Panel members from an ethnic minority are significantly less satisfied than white respondents, which is an area to investigate further. By district, only panel members from Rossendale are significantly less satisfied with the Council.

The final recommendation is that after the next BVPI survey in 2006, the performance indicators are measured using the same methodology for the interim results of 2008. This means using a random selection of addresses rather than the citizen's panel, and all the same questions, which while more costly, will ensure the results are directly comparable. (The final methodology for the BVPI 2006 survey is yet to be released. If a face-to-face method is allowed and used this may not be practical.)

8 Appendix

8.1 Socio-Economic Group Definitions

These groups are based on Market Research Society definitions and on the respondent. They are graded as A, B, C1, C2, D and E.

Group A

- Professional people, very senior managers in business or commerce or top-level civil servants.
- Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows

Group B

- Middle management executives in large organisations, with appropriate qualifications
- Principle officers in local government and civil service
- Top management or owners of small business concerns, educational and service establishments
- Retired people previously grade B, and their widows

Group C1

- Junior management, owners of small establishments, and all others in non-manual positions
- Jobs in this group have very varied responsibilities and educational requirements
- Retired people, previously grade C1, and their widows

Group C2

- All skilled manual workers, and those manual workers for responsibility for other people
- Retired people, previously grade C2, with pensions from their job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group D

- All semi skilled and unskilled manual workers, and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers
- Retired people, previously grade D, with pensions from their late job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group E

- All those entirely dependant on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons
- Those unemployed for a period exceeding six months (otherwise classified on previous occupation)
- Casual workers and those without a regular income

8.2 Marked Up Questionnaire